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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



CHARLES BOLSOVER CLASPED ESTRELLA IN HIS ARMS AND KISSED HER LOVELY UPTURNED FACE PASSIONATELY.

ESTRELLA'S MAD ENGAGEMENT.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"It is all over with me, Estrella; my feet have got on the downward track, and I must go to the dogs. There is nobody to care but you—and" (bitterly), "you will not find it hard to forget me, when you neither see nor hear of me. It's the way of the world, my girl; 'unto him that hath more shall be given;' but for the man that is down, what so appropriate as the kick with-out the halfpence?"

And Jack Lingard thrust his hands deep into his empty pockets as he stared moodily down at his feet.

The girl before him sighed heavily, and putting out a little slender hand, touched him gently, whilst she answered in a low earnest voice,—

"Jack, I never, never can forget you; it seems to me that you are all I have left to love, and it

goes near to break my heart when I think of all the sorrow you have endured. Do not make it worse for me to bear by being false to yourself and your manhood."

She was fair to look upon, this girl with glorious dark eyes, clad in all the bravery of silks and laces with jewels gleaming about her throat, her hair, in her tiny ears, around her slender wrists, and the man regarded her with something like anger as he thought of another even as fair as she, but who, for two years, had gone poorly clad, been meanly housed, yet had uttered no complaint, because of the love she bore him, which made poverty light and work a joy.

She had died with a smile on her sweet cold lips—a smile of utter love for him—remembering that, he groaned, and almost threw aside the slender daintily-gloved hand. But Estrella was not to be shaken off thus.

"Jack," she whispered, creeping nearer, "Jack, you used to love me once; surely trouble is not going to turn your heart from me! I would have come to you if that had been possible whilst she was alive. I wanted to know her; but Lady Lingard rules here, and I was never allowed out alone. But my heart was always with you, and

my desire is to help you so far as lies in my power."

"There is no help for me," the young man said, despairingly, "and it matters nothing what becomes of me, since she for whom I strove to keep straight and earn an honest living, is gone. The sooner I follow the better."

"No, no, my dear. For Madge's sake pull yourself together; be strong, be patient. I know that her place can never be filled, that always your life must be empty; but will you let my father and Lady Lingard say,—'We were right; his unhappy marriage proved his ruin'! Will you do so great a dishonour to Madge! Surely, surely, you owe it to her memory to keep her name stainless, your character honourable!"

He was evidently moved. Seeing this she pursued her tactics.

"And, again, dear Jack, when your time comes to die will you meet her, true and good as she found you, or degraded, besotted, debased! Don't you believe that she sees all your struggles, your grief, that she cannot be all happy even in Heaven if you go astray! Jack, Jack! for Madge's sake and mine do not sell yourself to the devil!"

"I'd sell myself to the first bidder," he answered, hoarsely, "for as true as that Heaven is above us I have not a *son*; I spent my last penny to-day to buy some pansies for my dear girl's grave. Oh Heaven! to think that whilst you were all living in luxury *she* was slowly dying of poverty and hunger."

Estrella, in a burst of tears, flung her arms about his neck, murmuring brokenly,—

"Oh, my brother! my brother! this is the worst of all!"

"Ay!" he said, through his clenched teeth, "and I had to see it, being powerless to avert her doom. I wrote my father, begging help for *her* sake. I'd have died rather than have asked one penny for myself. He did not reply; but *that* woman answered for him. Every word she wrote stabbed my darling to the heart; and—and there was no enclosure. I was compelled even to part with her wedding-ring to help defray funeral expenses. Well, I am keeping you, and my lady will make things harder for you. She knows we have met, so goodbye, Estrella; and if we never meet again try to think a little kindly of your lost brother."

"Stop! you shall not go like this; let us together interview father."

"Not I; he has driven me from his doors; I'll never enter them until he himself entreats me—and he may entreat too late; then there is always the river as a last resource."

"Oh, not that, not that! Jack, I have spent every penny of my allowance. I shall get no more until quarter day—if I had known where to find you, things would, perhaps, have been different. It is true I cannot now afford Madge help, but I will not let you go empty-handed. Take this," and she stripped off her necklet, "and these," unclasping her bracelets, "pawns, sell them, do what you will with them so that you save yourself—not a word. I have a right to do as I please with them; they were our mother's; she would sanction the gift. And—and—try now and again to send me news of yourself; I am not the envious girl so many believe me; the time may even come when I shall be compelled to leave home and find a refuge with you."

He tried to thrust back the jewels, but she was resolute; he told her in broken words how grateful he was for her generous gift, praying her for her own sake to receive it again, because Lady Lingard would certainly miss the costly baubles and demand an explanation.

Estrella threw back her little head proudly,—

"I am not responsible to her for their keeping, and to father will I explain. I shall tell him that they were given to save his son from a life of misery and the suicide's grave. Dear old Jack!" and as she lay in his embrace he thought with a sense of dread how very beautiful she was.

"Dear, I have judged you harshly; I find you as true as when we parted two years ago—do not let *that* woman change you. Your beauty will win you many admirers, and she will sell you to the highest bidder."

"No, I will never marry unless I can love my husband as you loved Madge. I used to be soft and gentle in ways and words, but I have been trained lately in a hard school, and you need not fear any weakness on my part. Now dear, I must go—she will be waiting—and if my heart is heavy I may not show it. Kiss me—write me to-morrow, addressing your letter to Nurse—she loves us both and will not fail us."

"I suppose," he interrupted moodily, "her child has usurped my place; curse him."

"Not the boy, Jack, dear; he is a little angel; almost I forgive his mother for his sake, and she adores him—but he loves me best of any, and that hurts her. Then she is always tormented with the fear that she will lose him as she lost the others. If he lives, however, all that should be yours and mine will go to Artie—so Jack, dear, we must strive to make our way in the world unaided but undimmed."

He regarded her pitifully; she looked so little fit to battle with adversity; she was so beautiful, so young (only nineteen), she had never felt the pinch of poverty; her soul had been starved of love, but her body was daintily adorned, she slept in the downiest of beds, ate of "the fat of the land," what could she know of want and equalor!

He kissed her very gently.

"Little sister, you have been most good to me, I doubted you in common with the rest, and you have heaped coals of fire upon my head. I cannot bear to take your jewels, and yet if I do not I must beg or steal; only, as Heaven is my witness, I will not let them be utterly lost. One day, when prosperity smiles upon me, I will give them back again; and I have an incentive to work now, because if things grow harder for you, I would fain have a shelter to offer you. Good-bye, Estrella; you grow marvellously like our mother."

One long, long embrace, one close clinging kiss and she was gone like a ghost through the dark night, back to Tower Castfort, the ancestral house of the Lingards.

She contrived to enter unseen, and going to the nursery bent over a cot to kiss a sleeping child who lay with tangled curls making a yellow glory about his flushed cheeks and white neck.

The door slowly opened to admit a woman of handsome presence, whose first youth had been past these many years. She regarded Estrella with cold blue eyes, taking in every detail of the creamy dress, the long cloak with its garnishing of buttercup yellow; then she said in slow cold tones,—

"If you are ready we will start; and allow me to say that I consider your affection for Artie just a thought too pronounced to be genuine. The carriage is at the door; your father dislikes the horses to stand—and may I ask why you are not wearing your necklet and bracelets?"

"I have given them to Jack," Estrella answered, sweeping by her; "he was starving, Lady Lingard—my brother—the rightful heir to thousands."

My lady frowned as she watched the slim figure going downstairs; to herself she said,—

"Given them to Jack, have you, mademoiselle! And you are bold enough to tell this to me! Well, it is hard to teach you submission, but it shall be done. If you marry well there will be so much more for the child." With that thought she, too, bowed over the sleeping boy, and, having kissed him, followed her stepdaughter down the shallow oaken stairs into the marble-paved hall.

But not a word did they exchange on their way to the hall. Estrella was thinking miserably of Jack, Lady Lingard was casting about in her own mind how best she could get rid of the thorn in her side with credit to herself and benefit to her infant boy.

She was a hard woman, this second wife of Sir Aylmer Lingard—hard, proud, ambitious. She had not even been in her youth when he married her twelve years ago. In fact, those who knew her best, said that she was then thirty-three, and glad enough to accept the rich widower, although he was ten years her senior and had two children. And she had obtained complete ascendancy over him, although she never professed to love him.

She came of a good old Scotch family, and she had all a Scotchwoman's "turn" for saving.

Presently children were born to her, but they faded away in a few months, and their mother, who dearly loved them, was frantic with grief.

With each successive bereavement she grew harder to poor Jack, until home was a hell on earth to him. She had entirely weaned his father's heart from him.

Estrella was away at school, and Jack went a little wild. He was not at all a handsome young man, although he bore a certain likeness to his beautiful young sister; but he was a general favourite on account of his sunny ways and good nature.

Everybody was sorry when, two years previous to the opening of this story, his father cast him off because he had committed the unpardonable sin of marrying a daughter of the people, "a mere shop-girl."

Jack had never dreamed that Sir Aylmer could be so harsh as he proved himself, and at first he hoped that he would relent and receive Madge, his good, pretty Madge, who made light of all their troubles for his sake. But he soon found himself face to face with poverty, and in every

conceivable way he endeavoured to pick up a scanty wage for himself and his darling.

Madge worked too; but she had never been strong, and presently she began to droop and fade, never complaining, but growing weaker with each passing day, until even Jack felt she was slipping from him.

With what tenderness he nursed her! How often he went hungry that she might have those little dainties so easy to prescribe, so hard to procure. If he could have taken her to some warm seaside place she might have been saved; but he was penniless, friendless; so Madge died in his arms, and the bereaved husband—himself a mere boy (but twenty-three) almost cursed the author of his birth, as he moaned,—

"Wife, wife! such a little would have saved you, and that little was withheld!"

And now, driven to the last extremity, he had come to his own home clandestinely to see his sister—an alien in his father's gates.

CHAPTER II.

ESTRELLA'S jewels were pawned, and with the money so obtained, Jack Lingard purchased new clothes, removed to a better lodging, and set to work to find employment. But no success crowned his efforts for three weeks, so that he relapsed into his old despondent state, and but for the thought of Estrella would have solved the mystery of life by rashly ending it.

One night he was strolling wearily down the Strand, when he heard two men talking of a lecture to be given in a room down a little by-street, and half through curiosity, half for lack of something better to do, he followed in their wake, coming finally to a well-lit and well-ventilated room, which answered the purpose of a church on Sundays to those who would otherwise never have worshipped at all.

As he halted in the doorway, a middle-aged man said to him in friendly fashion,—

"You're a stranger here, sir; will you come up to the front! Mr. Revel is always pleased to see a new face."

So listlessly Jack followed him, to find himself presently seated quite close to the platform on which had been placed a chair, table, and piano, with a few articles used to illustrate the lecture.

The room now began to fill, and punctually at eight a young man appeared on the platform, to be most cordially welcomed. A glance sufficed to show that he was a gentleman, and Jack felt pleasantly surprised.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, with military bearing, and handsome as a Saxon chief. His hair and moustache alike were golden, his eyes deep, dark blue; the squareness of the chin lent resolution to the face, and as poor Jack regarded him, he thought how good it would be to have such a man as a friend. Advancing to the table Mr. Rodney Revel spoke a few words of thanks for the cordial reception awarded him, and then plunged at once into his subject. He spoke fluently, in a mellow voice; he told his listeners many curious things, using a small magic lantern to make his meaning clear; then he diverged, showing them how the meanest labour might be glorified, how work might become a blessing not a hardship, and then he grew eloquent; his cheeks flushed, his voice rose, and his great blue eyes flashed.

"Work was God-like, work was divine; only to the honest toiler was it given to know the perfect content, the sweetness of rest earned before accepted. A slothful life must needs be an unhappy one; must needs exercise a baneful influence on those around," and he ended with the words, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

Then a silver-haired lady sat down to the piano playing a spirited air, and presently everybody (save poor Jack, who had no heart to sing) took up the refrain, whilst a few were busy dispensing light refreshments, for which no charge was made. After that the meeting was declared over. Mr. Rodney Revel who had walked to the door, shook hands with each man as he passed



by, but as Jack approached he said, in a low, quick way,—

"Stay, I want to see you alone."

The poor fellow almost resented his familiarity but kindness was a rare thing, now, and the speaker had impressed him favourably. So he loitered, until the room being clear, Mr. Revel, addressing the middle-aged man who had given Jack his seat, told him he could go, adding,—

"Lock the doors after you; I shall leave by the back way, and see that the place is secure. Good-night, Starr, remember to have the draughts and chess boards ready for to-morrow night."

Then, linking his hand in Jack's arm, he drew him to a little room behind the platform. It was cozily furnished, and a bright fire was burning there.

"Now," said Mr. Revel, "we can talk without interruption; but first let me ask you to overlook any apparent freedom on my part. Obviously you are not one of us—and, poor old fellow, I am afraid you are down on your luck, you look so hopeless, so purposeless."

As he spoke he stretched out his hand in friendliest fashion, and warmed by his manner Jack gripped it hard; then he said,—

"Yes, you are right; I am stranded; have neither friends nor influence. I don't suppose a soul in the world cares a farthing whether I live or die, except my sister."

Rodney Revel brightened over those last three words.

"You have a sister! and a good one! You cannot do better than show your appreciation of her. See here, old man, I hate to appear inquisitive, but I should like you to tell me just exactly what you can do, for if—as I take it—you are looking for work I may be able to help you. All you say shall be regarded as a strict secret. I shall not abuse your confidence! and just as a guarantee of good faith I will tell you something first about myself. I am sub-editor of 'Bright Bits,' and I have a fancy—call it a crank if you like—to employ my leisure hours in trying to help and to raise these good fellows about me. I am by no means a missionary. I guess most people would consider me unorthodox in my creed, which is simply to love my neighbours as myself; pay my way like a man, and like a man live uprightly. I am called Rodney Revel by my friends—I believe my relatives have another title for me, namely 'Rodney the fool,' and he laughed so good-humouredly, he looked so handsome, big and courageous, that Jack's last remnant of pride broke down.

"I'll be equally frank," he said, and forthwith told his tale, reserving his name until the conclusion; he thought then that his new friend changed colour, but he was so calm that Jack fancied his eyes had played him a trick, especially as Revel remarked directly,—

"You spoke of a sister; is she in the least like you as regards features and disposition?"

Jack laughed then.

"Like me? Great Heavens no; Estrella is lovely and for all her gentle ways she has twice my moral courage; she is clever, too. Poor little girl! if only I could take her away from that hateful woman I should be at rest. But even now I am living on her charity, and Heaven only knows what she may be enduring. I am afraid that in the end Lady Lingard will have her own way and marry her to Bolsover."

"Against her will? But if Miss Lingard is morally brave, will she be coerced?"

"She is only a girl after all, and home is a dreadful place to her," said Jack, sorrowfully, "if only I had a pittance we could live together, for Estrella isn't the kind of girl to fret herself over the lack of new gowns."

"Does she seem much averse to the arrangement? Are she and Bolsover, I think you called the fellow, very antagonistic? Is he a decent sort of chap?"

"I can tell you nothing about him. Neither myself nor Estrella have seen him. I suppose he is the usual vapid animal one meets by hundreds daily, but he will be Lord Bolsover one day; his grandfather is my stepmother's cousin, and as Estrella will have a little fortune on her

marriage, and is a beautiful girl into the bargain, the old man and my lady have agreed upon the alliance. At present the chosen awain is absent—travelling as people say, but I have it on good authority he is still in town. I hope he will come to some untimely end before he has a chance to make my sister wretched."

"That is a nice kindly wish," said Revel with a laugh, "and proves to me that your digestion is impaired. Come to my lodgings to supper, you will feel better after, and we can talk matters over quietly."

Jack gratefully accepted his invitation.

The room into which his new friend ushered him was comfortably, but not luxuriously, furnished. Still it seemed like a haven of rest to him; and he sat far into the night talking. At parting, Revel said,—

"Come up to-morrow. You can be a great help to me with my good fellows, and I may have something to tell you—mind, I promise nothing—but do not despair."

On the morrow Jack duly presented himself at the lecture-room, to be warmly received by Rodney Revel. Working in concert with him, he initiated the men into the mysteries of draughts, chess, and whist, spending quite an enjoyable evening. Then they walked homewards together, and Rodney, after a brief apology said,—

"I have not anything great to offer you, but it is the best I can do for you, Lingard, and it may lead to something else. There is a vacant clerkship in our office, salary twenty-five shillings weekly—hours, 9 A.M. until 8 P.M. Will you accept it?"

Poor Jack was only too glad, and the next day he wrote Estrella, telling her of his good luck, speaking in terms of highest praise of his new friend. Her reply—which followed quickly—he showed Rodney. One passage ran thus:—

"I hate to deceive my father and Lady Lingard, but I must either do this or keep silence to you, and that is worst of all. But, oh! Jack, my dear old brother, if only I could be with you, I would not care a fig how hard I worked, how poorly I lived! Is there nothing I can do to augment your little income? I won't be a burden to you, but I cannot long endure life here. Mr. Bolsover is coming home, they say, next week, and Lady Lingard intends taking me to Bolsover House, to be approved by my future lord and master. Oh! Jack, dear Jack, save me from the fate which threatens me. I know I shall hate the man who is willing to have his wife chosen for him."

"Enough of myself; it is wrong to trouble you with my troubles. Of your friend Mr. Revel I cannot think too highly; he is indeed 'a hero in the strife,' and so long as I live I shall be grateful to him for his goodness, praying always that he may reap as he has sown."

"I should like to know Miss Lingard," said Rodney, reflectively. "She must be a good girl; and I say Jack, whatever happens, save her from a loveless marriage. This, Bolsover, now—"

"Oh! don't speak of him; he must be an utter cad; Estrella shall not be driven into marriage with him; but remember, she has been daintily nurtured, delicately reared, and how am I to supply her even with necessities on twenty-five shillings a week!"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," said Rodney, quietly; "and if Miss Lingard is the girl I take her to be she will prefer poverty and freedom to gilded slavery and the loss of her own self-respect."

It was three days later that he called at Jack's lodgings. "Old fellow," he said, "duty takes me out of town for a few days; do your best for our chums at the lecture-room, and I'll be back as soon as I possibly can."

The meeting that night fell flat; the master mind was wanting, the master hand sorely missed; as one man observed, "the place ain't the same when Mr. Revel ain't in it. He gets such a close grip o' your heart, you can't get along without him."

Jack himself felt peculiarly depressed; it was wonderful what affection he entertained for Rodney Revel, considering the short time which had elapsed since their first meeting.

As he entered his room he saw a telegram upon the table, and tearing it open with a great fear lest evil had happened to Estrella, he read:—"Meet me at Liverpool Street at 10:30. I have left home.—E. L." He caught his breath sharply; so she, this dainty delicate girl was driven from her father's doors even as he had been. He rushed out; there was no time to lose, Estrella must not reach the cruel busy city alone and unprotected. He had little to offer, but to that little she was welcome, and thinking thus he made his way quickly to the station. He was not an instant too soon, the train having already rushed in, and presently he had Estrella in his arms, and she was sobbing out,—

"Oh! Jack, dear, I could not help it; I would not go to meet Mr. Bolsover, and I don't care how poorly I fare, if only we are together."

CHAPTER III.

ESTRELLA LINGARD had not left Tower Eastfort clandestinely. She had flatly refused to meet the husband chosen for her; and Lady Lingard had replied by saying,—

"Very well, then you must leave home. I will place you with people who will not allow you either much liberty or amusement; you will soon change your mind."

"I shall go to Jack," the girl answered quietly. "My father's love has failed me, and he refuses me the protection I need. My brother is consequently my proper guardian."

My lady had laughed scoffingly.

"He is so abundantly supplied with this world's goods that he will be glad to share them with you. Well, go to him; learn for the first time in your life what it is to be poorly housed, poorly fed, and scantily clad. Only on one condition shall you return, that condition is that you marry Mr. Bolsover; and I give you six weeks in which to make your choice."

So Estrella had packed one modest trunk with her plainest dresses, the most useful and necessary articles; and having fondly kissed her little step-brother, had turned her back upon her home, setting her face towards "the lights o' London."

To Jack it was wonderful what a home-like air she contrived to impart to the rooms. He had given up his bedchamber (a mere closet) to her, saying that the sofa would serve him well enough until times improved; and Estrella, with her arms about his neck, had said,—

"Yes, they *shall* improve. I have come to help, not to drag you down, and I mean to find work. For the present we shall not do so badly, I have four sovereigns in my purse, and intend to practise greatest economy."

She had been with him a week now, and although she had not succeeded yet in obtaining work, she had been very busy.

Every spare moment she used in learning the hundred and one duties common to a housewife of the middle-class, and with much fear and trembling concocted cheap but savoury dishes for Jack on his return.

She was generally successful in her efforts, and his words of praise gave her the necessary encouragement to persevere.

It is true that she often felt suffocated in the dark small rooms, that many self-imposed tasks were distasteful to her—it could not fail to be so, to one daintily reared; but Estrella was not easily daunted, and had no false pride.

At the close of the week Jack told her with pleasure that Rodney Revel had returned, and, rather nervously, asked her if she would that night attend the lecture-room with him, adding,—

"He likes to give these poor friends of his pleasure, and when I mentioned casually that you sang well, he asked if you would consent to give them some ballads. Was I wrong to promise for you?"

"No," she said, after a brief hesitation, "I will do it with the utmost readiness; and I have the satisfaction of knowing my audience is not a critical one. Then, too, I owe Mr. Revel a heavy debt for his goodness to you, and shall be glad to repay it, though in so poor a way."

That evening she dressed herself in a deep ruby gown, which suited her southern style of beauty admirably. There were soft little ruffles of white lace about the throat and wrists, but in all other respects it was perfectly plain; and Jack, having pronounced her "fit" they walked together to the room.

Rodney Reval was already there, and greeted them warmly, whilst a momentary gleam of involuntary admiration flashed in the blue eyes. Then he said with some slight disappointment,—

"You have brought no music, Miss Lingard!"

"I shall not need it. Jack is familiar with some of my songs, and so can accompany me," she answered, smiling. "I can only hope to please your friends. Jack has been telling me what very good fellows they are."

Then the first arrivals entering made further speech impossible.

Later she sang "Twickenham Ferry," in a pure, sweet voice of considerable strength, and her success was at once assured; in response to the enthusiastic applause she gave "Olivia," and after that some good old-fashioned glees, in which everybody joined, brought the bright evening to a close. Rodney walked home with the brother and sister, and a little shyly Estrella praised the good work he was doing. He answered her quickly, eagerly,—

"You too can help if you will, Miss Lingard; I have been thinking we might organise a singing-class, with yourself at the head. I am not a musical genius myself; in fact I shall be just as pleased as my poor fellows to learn from you."

"You do me too much honour; I will work very hard to deserve it," the girl said, simply. "Pray do not hesitate to command my services, remember how much I owe you for your goodness to Jack."

"I did very little; pray do not let it weigh upon your memory. To-morrow, if I may, I will call with your brother to make some arrangements for the new class; and I must look carefully to myself or I shall be ousted from my place in your favour."

With a little laugh she gave him her hand, they having now reached their lodgings.

"Oh, you won't find me a very formidable rival; still I warn you I shall do my best to make my new friends like me."

"Well," said Jack, as they entered their sitting-room, "what do you think of Reval?"

"That he is as good as he looks, which is saying a great deal. He reminds me of pictures I have seen of Harold and Richard Cœur de Lion—he would be simply splendid at the head of an army."

"Yes, I always think he has made a mistake in his choice of a profession; and yet he is a man who could ill be spared even in that. My dear, but for you and Reval, I never could have borne to live out my natural life, and the glance which travelled to the photograph upon the mantel told how great was his grief for the dead woman who seemed to look at him with eyes full of tender love."

Estrella kissed him in silence, then made haste to prepare the simple supper, over which Jack recovered something like his usual tone.

She saw much of Rodney in the days that followed, and all unconsciously she was learning to regard him as a hero, the noblest, best of men; and her heart began to beat with unaccustomed force when she heard his steps upon the stair, or let her hand rest a moment in his when he came or went. One day he found her alone and in a state of pleasurable excitement.

"I have such good news for you," she said, gaily. "I am no longer to be a drone in the hive, for I have got work at last, and feel myself quite an important creature."

"Tell me all about it," said Rodney, smiling down at her flushed and eager face; "nothing that concerns you fails to interest me."

"Thank you; well, I have obtained the post of daily governess to three little girls, daughters of a confectioner. I am to receive twenty pounds a year, and my hours are not long; from ten until four, only I am afraid poor Jack must dine at some cheap restaurant—that is the only drawback."

Rodney looked thoughtful.

"I don't wish to distress you, but could you not have waited for a better opening? I am afraid you will not find your new life very easy; where is this place?"

"Close to the Strand, and really you need not think of me as being unhappy. Mrs. Taylor, my employer, is a nice, ladylike little woman, with a kind voice, and I am not clever or accomplished enough to undertake more onerous duties. My education is so purely fashionable and superficial."

"May I ask you one question without offence, Miss Lingard? Thank you," as she bowed; "do you never regret leaving home? As Mr. Bolsover's wife you would have every luxury—as a daily governess it will sometimes be hard work to make both ends meet."

"Mr. Reval, you are the last man to give worldly advice," she answered, the colour flaming into her cheeks, "and I hoped that you believed me as capable of work as I am incapable of stooping to marry Charles Bolsover."

"But do you know anything against the man?" he questioned serenely.

"No; he is only a name to me; but he must be horrid to be drawn into such an arrangement; it is unholy, and I will not be a party to it. If ever I marry it will be because I honour and love the man I shall call husband. I regret nothing I have done. I am happier in my new life than I have been for years—only I should like sometimes to see Artie—my little step-brother; we love each other so dearly; but he is young, and they will teach him to forget me, and that is hard."

Her lip quivered; a moment she was silent, then she resumed brightly,—

"It is not given to men only to work, as I intend to prove to you; I used to find the days so long at home, but they pass rapidly now, I have so much to do, so much to learn. Then the evenings are so pleasant; I shall be quite sorry when the summer comes and ends the meetings."

"We shall still find something to do," he rejoined, and her heart leapt for joy that he should link her thus to him. "We," how delightfully friendly it sounded; she was of some use to him, and the thought made her glad. He had risen to go, and now as he held her hand, he said, "your hours do not tally with Jack's; I think you must let me take you to and from Mrs. Taylor's; London streets are not the nicest for young girls to traverse alone."

"You are very good," Estrella answered, blushing and trembling with joy at his kindly thoughtfulness for her; "but I am afraid that I should be imposing upon your goodness."

"But if I tell you that I shall look forward to those walks with pleasure, will you not consent to the arrangement?"

"If you wish it—yes."

"When do you enter upon your new career?"

"Next Monday; Mrs. Taylor is anxious that the children should lose no more time in pursuing their studies; they have been without a governess for two months; and as they are very delicate she is afraid to send them to school. Oh! if only you could guess what a happy, grateful girl I am! I shall no longer be a burthen to Jack, and shall still be able to attend to his needs."

"I think Jack is a very lucky fellow to have so good a sister," said Rodney; and so tender were the blue eyes meeting hers that she was covered with confusion. But when he had gone she stood before his portrait, which he had given her brother, and under her breath she said,—

"I love you, oh I love you, my hero and my king! Perhaps you will never guess or care to know it, but my heart will follow you wherever you go, and in my prayers I shall entreat Heaven for you always. I am a better woman for having known you, and if a sadder, why then complain?"

She had given him the pure passionate worship of her heart, no mean gift. With her, as with all true women, dwelt the adoration for the heroic and the noble; the yearning after all things great and glorious, and in her eyes Rodney Reval was glorious indeed.

On the Monday she began her new life, and he was always ready to escort her to and from

Mrs. Taylor's, so that the kindly little woman said to herself,—

"I shall not keep her long; that big fair man loves her, and who can wonder? Well, I wish them joy, but I shall be sorry to lose her."

The days went by quickly now, so that almost before she realised it the six weeks of grace allowed her were all but gone. It was a bright afternoon when Rodney meeting her recalled this fact to her.

"Are you still resolved to stay in your lot with us?" he said.

"Yes, for me there is no going back. I do not wish it."

CHAPTER IV.

PRESENTLY he said,—

"Jack can spare you to me for a few hours, and he will not be home very early; will you drive with me to Twickenham? I know a place where I can get a capital chaise and quiet pony, and the jaunt will do you good."

It was not always pleasant to Estrella to walk through all weathers and under all circumstances, and then holidays were so rare now, that her eyes sparkled, her cheeks flushed with excitement at the prospect before her.

"I should like nothing so well," she said gratefully. "You are very good to me."

"Nonsense; I am thinking most of myself. Now, if you hurry home for your wraps, I will call for you in a quarter of an hour. Bring something warm with you, the evenings are very cold yet, and I must not offend Jack by taking poor care of you."

She laughed as she left him, and hurried to her lodgings, where she loitered longer than usual over her toilet, because in his eyes she would be fair. Still she was ready when he drove round, and he complimented her on her punctuality.

There was still enough frostiness in the air to make her furs acceptable, but the afternoon was bright and clear, and as she drank in deep breaths of fresh air, she said,—

"This is divine; I don't know how to thank you enough for your kindness."

"Then don't attempt it," he answered quietly, "and I wish for no thanks."

They drove by way of Richmond, thence to Twickenham, where they had tea, then on the homeward journey they passed through Kew. It was then that Rodney said,—

"I hope this is not the last excursion that we shall take together. Do you remember that first night we met you sang 'Twickenham Ferry'? I said to myself one day I would bring you down here, but I hardly hoped it would be so soon. I never hear that song now but I associate it with you. I half expected to see some jolly young waterman come out to greet you with the words—'An sure an' ye're welcome to Twickenham Town.'"

"Oh," smiling and blushing, "you forget there is no ferry now; only an unromantic bridge and no romantic young waterman."

"I sit corrected, but it is hardly kind to drop so heavily down upon me."

Silence awhile; the reins fell loosely upon the pony's sides, the driver was forgetful of his duty; he was thinking how good it would be to call this gentle yet brave girl his own, how sweet to find himself the dear object of her love.

He was by no means a coward, but almost his heart failed him as he realised how very much he wished to ask of her. Desperately he began—

"Estrella," then paused, whilst she all trembling with vague fear, and indescribable joy, answered,—

"Yes; what is it you would say?"

"Only this, dear heart, that I love you; that I would fain call you wife—but you must consider well before you answer, because I have not much to offer, and you have been always used to luxury—"

"Not always," she interrupted very softly. "Jack and I have made acquaintance with poverty of late."

"Still I pray you to think before you answer, because having once won you I could not lightly let you go. You are a minor; your people can

recall you for at least two years. Take time for thought. With your beauty, your birth you may do better than marry the sub-editor of a not very popular paper."

"I could not do better than marry the man I love," she said, under her breath. "I can never regret giving myself to you."

"But there may be obstacles; your people may exercise their extreme authority, and I may not be all I seem."

"Suppose I take you on trust," she whispered back, "and even if I am recalled, I leave my heart with you; my promise to you shall be my bond." Then he put an arm about her.

"These words make you mine, and no one shall have power to take you from me."

As their lips met in that first kiss of love, he felt her tears wet upon his cheek; she clung to him with tender hands, saying,—

"Rodney, I am the happiest woman on earth; so happy I must needs cry—oh! I will strive to be worthy of you." Then he stayed her words with kisses, and in a blissful dream they drove quietly home.

Jack was seated at his solitary tea, and of course he must needs be told the great news. He smiled sadly as he congratulated Rodney, adding,—

"But do not take her away from me too soon; I shall be lost without her."

"Rodney has promised not to separate us," broke in Estrella, blushing crimson, "our home is to be yours, and I will do my best to make it happy."

Then the question arose should Sir Aylmer and Lady Lingard be made acquainted with Estrella's mad engagement. They had all but cast her off, and Jack declared it was quite unnecessary to communicate with them, but Rodney said,—

"Let us deal fairly by them; I will write Sir Aylmer to-morrow; and sweetheart have no fear. I will not give you back to them having won you."

Estrella also wrote to her father, and three days later received replies both from him and my lady. Sir Aylmer commanded her to return home at once, to throw over her plebeian lover, or to consider herself henceforth a stranger to him. My lady went further; she upbraided her in unmeasured terms, expressed a wish that they might never again meet, accused her of ingratitude, and plainly said she was a disgrace to her family, like "that ne'er-do-weel her brother." She concluded by hoping that Estrella would soon be taught the madness of her conduct, and that the so hastily arranged marriage should result in misery to her. It was quite evident that Rodney Revel was an adventurer, who hoped to establish himself securely by wedding her.

Perhaps it was only natural the girl should shed many bitter tears over these effusions, remembering the time when her father had been dear to her, when his every word was full of kindness. But indignation swallowed up her grief, when having shown her letters to Rodney, he produced his. It was written by Sir Aylmer, but to Estrella it was evident that my lady had been the dictator; her father was weak and foolish, but not naturally cruel. He never could have devised those cunning sentences, each of which carried its own cruel stab; to her surprise Rodney treated the letter with merry contempt.

"They are angry now," he said lightly, "but by-and-by they will relent, and I really think, sweetheart, our best plan is to marry without any unnecessary delay. I shall then be in a position to care for you, and I am quite able to afford you a nice little home in the suburbs with a neat capable maid. There shall be a room for Jack, of course; and so, dear girl, you had best tell Mrs. Taylor that after quarter day you will enter your new life."

She made no demur; for long years she had known very little kindness, and did she not hold the blessed truth of her lover's worthiness in her heart? She gave him her hand in so natural and simple a manner that he was quite as much touched by the gesture as by her words, which were simple and natural too.

"I love you very dearly. I will do my best to be a good wife, and to help you in your noble

work. Perhaps some day, when father has learned how wise was the choice I made, how happy I am, he will relent and forgive me, if only for my dead mother's sake."

"And if not, my dearest!"

"If not, I will leave all and follow you, because you make my world."

Mrs. Taylor was not surprised when Estrella blushing told her the news.

"I saw it from the beginning," she said. "I am sure Mr. Revel is a man of whom any girl might be proud. I hope his people will be nice to you, my dear," and that remark set Estrella thinking she really knew nothing of her lover's friends. That afternoon when as usual she met him, she said,—

"I wonder, Rodney, if there are many people in this great city quite so poor in relatives. Have you no one belonging to you?"

"I have a sister," he answered, quietly; "she is called Theo, and one day you shall know her. I think that you would be very good friends."

"And where does she live? Does she know nothing of our engagement yet? How is she employed; for of course she works? Does she resemble you?"

"What a catalogue of queries! Suppose we take them in order! She resides in a mere village, on the south coast. At present she does not guess the good gift I shall soon make her. We do not correspond often, owing to circumstances. But when you are my wife I will take you down to her. Just now she is especially busy with her school. For the rest, she is as unlike me as possible. She is small, brown haired, brown eyed, very pretty and possessed of a great deal of character. Just the sort of girl Jack should marry—he wants guidance and cheerful society."

"Poor Jack! I do not think he will ever take another wife. And, after all, second marriages are very much like second-hand clothes. Do you suppose (with a look of love) that I could ever put any one in your place, Rodney?"

"Probably not; and I confess the idea is not pleasant that you could; but Jack is essentially a man who needs feminine encouragement and support; he and Theo seem made each for the other."

"I had no idea that you were given to match-making," she answered, smiling; then added more gravely, "I am not sure that you should wish Theo such a fate, for I am sure Jack's best as well as his first love lies buried with the poor Madge I never knew, whose loss he so truly deplores."

With characteristic abruptness Rodney dismissed the subject; and the remainder of the walk was occupied by desultory chat.

Jack was not in when they reached home, but an orange-coloured envelope occupied a prominent position upon the mantel. It was addressed to Estrella, and, with a sudden presentiment of trouble, she tore it open. It was from Lady Lingard, and ran,—

"Come home. Artie dying; saks constantly for you."

Her face whitened, her beautiful dark eyes filled with tears as she gave the brief message into her lover's hand, saying,—

"I must go! Oh, I must go! Artie always loved me so dearly, and he is dying. I am sorry for her now; he is her only child, and she worshipped him. You will take me to Liverpool-street, and return to tell Jack the news, will you not? Ask him not to be offended that they have recalled me in his stead; it is for the boy's sake I go, and if I can I will effect a reconciliation between my father and brother."

She was crying quietly as he took her in his arms.

"I am most grieved for you," he said, "because you love the child dearly, although, according to rumour, you have little cause to do so. But, Estrella, my own, you are going back to luxury; do you think you can bear to return to this life and a poor lover? There will be much pressure brought to bear upon you. Can you resist, and still cleave loyally to me?"

"I will never love you less, come what may; always best and dearest, always my hero and my king! Does not that content you?"

"I am more than content looking into your eyes, for they are the mirrors of truth."

CHAPTER V.

Tired and faint Estrella reached Castfort. It struck her with a keen sense of irony that those who had driven her away were the first to recall her. When she had left home her modest belongings had occupied the rear of a small cart, now the magnificently-appointed carriage, with splendidly-groomed black horses, was in waiting. Of one servant she asked,—

"Is there no change for the better in Master Artie's condition?"

"No miss, none; he's just going like the other little ladies and gentlemen, and he couldn't rest until he had seen you. I should like to say, if you please, miss, that we are all glad to have you back, and hope we shall soon have the pleasure of welcoming Master Jack."

"I hope so," she answered vaguely, because everything seemed strange and unreal to her; "you are very kind to remember us at all; and I trust that my poor little brother may yet be spared to us."

Then she was driven homewards; but neither Sir Aylmer nor my lady met her in the hall; only the old nurse—a privileged person—came down the wide stairs, and taking the lovely face between her hands, kissed it warmly, afterwards apologising for her freedom; "but, dear heart, the house has been lost without you, miss; and if you please will you go up to Master Artie at once, for he's crying always for you."

So Estrella stole upstairs, pausing to listen outside the sufferer's room. She heard the mother's bitter sobs, the father's occasional "My boy! my boy! may Heaven take you. I cannot bear to see your pain!" mingling with the deep-drawn gasping breaths, the hollow cough, the melancholy plaint, "I want Estie! Estie! she was always kind!"

Then she opened the door, and stood with fast-beating heart upon the threshold. The dying child was lying with his arms tossed above his head, his fair curls all wet with the death-dew, streaming upon the pillows, his eyes wide and staring. Stepping forward Estrella said in a shaken voice,—

"Artie, I am here!"

He gave a glad tremulous cry, and the next moment was folded in her arms, whilst her tears were falling fast upon the wasted, waxen face.

"Don't cry," he said, "I want to hear you laugh again, as you used when we were alone. Oh! what good times we had; but they can never come again. Have they told you I am dying? I was sorry once, but I am not sorry now. Always I am so tired, and my legs ache as they used when we went long walks, and you would try to carry me home. I was such a bothersome boy."

"No, no, dear Artie; I loved you too well ever to think that."

He fondled her cheek with his frail hand.

"I know! I know! but when I go to sleep will you try to cheer poor mamma; and I want you to bring back brother Jack. I was so little when he went away I do not remember much about him, only I have felt often it wasn't right for a boy like me to take everything away from him. Yes, yes," rolling his head restlessly, "I could not help hearing what people said as I walked or drove with nurse; they used to whisper that I had robbed brother Jack of everything—and their words sank here—hurt here!" touching his feebly pulsing heart—"I could not forget them; I thought over them, dreamt of them."

"Hush, Artie dear, do not distress yourself; I am sure if Jack knew you as I do he would love you very dearly. Poor little brother!"

"I shall not be poor much longer," smiling, "because, Estie, I am going to Heaven; but I did pray I might see you again, and you have come. Mamma, dear, you won't send Estie away any more!"

"Not if she wishes to stay; if she promises to be good. Oh, my boy, my best loved one, you break my heart! Is there no power on earth to snatch you from the grave?" and dropping on

her knees she flung her arms across the bed, weeping madly.

Artie looked distressed, but he was too weak then to do more than touch her bowed head with his thin fingers. For the rest of the night he lay quite quiet, sleeping from time to time; but he woke when Estrella went away to throw aside her wraps and take a little necessary refreshment.

He feebly complained that "Estie never stayed with him now," and the unhappy, jealous, broken-hearted mother cried passionately,—

"Is that girl always to be first and dearest with my children? What sorcery does she use to win their hearts away from me? Oh, Artie! Artie! have you no love left for your mother?"

"Yes," wearily, "but I love Estie best; she is never cross; I want her now."

Then he fell asleep again, whilst the weary girl, returning, took up her post by his bed, and so quiet was his breathing that presently the silence lulled her to rest, and the dark head lay by the fair one upon the pillows.

The next day the child lay in a semi-conscious state, with closed lids and feebly fluttering breath. Once or twice he murmured the words,—

"Brother Jack!" but beyond that he did not speak. Doctors came and went.

"No hope," they said; "twenty-four hours will end it all."

But the mother could not realise this; when at the dead of the night her darling, turning on his pillows, said brightly,—

"I have had a lovely dream—to-morrow I will tell it all to you and daddy—to-morrow—I am too tired now—and there is something I want to say to Estie about brother Jack—but I must wait a little while—because my head seems so light and empty. I cannot quite remember what it was."

He lay very silent after that until, as the slow dark hours wore towards the dull grey dawn, he suddenly lifted himself, and with a faint, sweet voice, broke into melody—

"Oh, to be there, where never tears of sorrow
Shall dim the eye, nor aching pain her care
Shall overcloud our morning.
Oh! to be there! Oh, to be there!"

There was a wrapt, glorified look on the wee face, as the fair head fell once more upon its pillows. Those who saw it felt the end was very near then; never mortal were that look unless within sight of the Golden Gate.

The weeping mother bent over him, as though her great love would have power to stay his flight; but now he scarcely heeded her, scarcely was conscious of her presence.

There were angel voices sounding in his ears, angel forms before his dimming eyes, and the earth, with earthly things alike, were forgotten.

Slowly he sank, and just as the first "pipe of half-awakened birds" thrilled through the silence, the first ray of the newly-risen sun made a shaft of light athwart the room, the innocent soul of the child returned to its Maker, and my lady's house was left unto her desolate.

It was Estrella, who, with reverent hands closed the white lids, who saying brokenly,—

"It is all over," sought to lead away the bereaved mother. But she was like one gone mad, and with a wild shriek flung herself beside her child, crying on him most piteously to speak to her once,—only once again—to comfort her breaking heart with his farewell kiss. Then some one in mercy lifting her, carried her away; but through all that sad day they heard her cries, her bitter lamentations, and even those who had most cause to dislike or fear her felt dislike and fear vanish at the approach of pity.

Sir Aylmer, looking dreadfully broken and old, said entrelingly to his daughter,—

"You will stay with us, Estrella, until—he—is carried out. I am afraid to think what this will mean to your mother; Artie was our last, our only hope."

"You have Jack," she answered gently; "but I will not speak of him now that your heart is so sore; yes, father, I will stay whilst you need me," and she kissed him fondly, remembering how kind he once had been.

She wrote both Rodney and Jack, giving them

a detailed account of all that had taken place since her arrival, adding,—

"I feel that it is *here* my duty lies at present, and that both of you will agree to this. But so soon as I can be spared I shall return to you and the old, working, happy life."

The whole of the funeral arrangements devolved upon her, for Lady Lingard remained prostrate, and Sir Aylmer was lost without her.

So the sad day came, the mourners were assembled, when, to their astonishment, my lady, who had kept her bed until now, came into their midst, in a heavy voice announcing her intention of following her child to his last long home.

Nobody tried to dissuade her, feeling it would be useless; and dry-eyed, stony in face and mien she took her seat. No tremor passed over her when alighting at the churchyard. The coffin was borne towards the church, and steadily she followed.

It was not until she stood beside the open grave that her love and grief had way. With a sudden low moan she sank upon her knees, remaining in that position throughout the rest of the service, her dull, hopeless sobs striking far more cruelly than tears or low wallings upon the listening ear.

In the end it was found necessary to remove her by force, and fainting she was borne back to the carriage.

She was still unconscious when they reached Tower Castfort, but in a little while she rallied, and begged that she might be left alone. To this Sir Aylmer demurred, but she with a touch of her old imperious manner, said,—

"I am broken down, but still mistress of myself and queen of my household—go—I will be obeyed," and without a word he went.

But the loneliness, the sense of loss was intensified when the mourners were gone and only he and Estrella remained together. The girl was very pale and sad, for she had loved the dead boy dearly; his affection had been her only solace in the evil days at home, the one link to bind her to it; and he was gone.

She wondered vaguely if now Jack would be recalled, and as though in answer to her thought Sir Aylmer said drearily,—

"The old race will soon be extinct; it dies with me; there must be a curse upon it, for my only surviving son is lost to me by his own folly; my daughter obstinately refuses to wed according to my wishes and her station—truly I am of all men the most unfortunate."

Then Estrella spoke gently,—

"It remains with you, father, whether you will be lonely all your days. I ask nothing for myself but I beg you to recall Jack. He is your first-born, the child of the wife you loved so dearly; it is a monstrous iniquity that he should be robbed of his birthright. He has never disgraced your name, his only fault has been his loyalty to a good, true-hearted girl whom he loved in all devotion and honour. Oh, father, with what measure ye mete it shall be meted you again," and if you are so hard with our poor boy what mercy dare you ask or hope for yourself?"

He stirred uneasily, feebly said,—

"I should like to see Jack again; I do not feel so angry with him as I did. I am growing old and feeble, I should like to be at peace with you all. But I dare not recall him, your mother would never consent to that, and," querulously, "drop the subject."

She obeyed, presently going to her room, but she could not rest; there was a vague sense of evil weighing upon her, which she could not shake off.

She drew up her blind, and seating herself before the window, looked out over the grounds bathed now in the silvery moonlight.

There was the lake where she and Jack had learned to swim; there the willow where her own mother had always made her summer reading-room. How long ago it all seemed!

The lights in the house were all extinguished now, and her heart gave a quick throb of fear as she heard a door cautiously opened, but she did not cry out; only strained every faculty to discover from whence the sound proceeded. Then suddenly she saw a tall black-robed figure issue

from the house, and a great horror filled her—it was Lady Lingard on her way to the lake!

CHAPTER VI.

SUCH a journey could have but one end; and with sorrow, the wretched woman was evidently bent upon ending her existence. As Estrella grasped that fact she rushed from the room, going fleetly and noiselessly downstairs, her heart throbbing wildly. There was no time to waken the sleeping household, so the next instant she was alone, under the clear sky, flying after that rapidly moving figure.

Her footsteps made no noise, for her way lay over level lawns, and not once did Lady Lingard turn, having neither thought nor fear of pursuit. She had also a good start, and, despite Estrella's swiftness, she reached the water edge before the girl could come up with her. Even as her stepdaughter cried her name, she flung up her arms and with a moan plunged into the deep waters; there followed immediately a second splash, then the sound of a hoarse voice, imploring,—

"Let me go! oh, let me go!"

She was a heavy woman, and struggled with her rescuer; but Estrella if slight, was strong, and gripping her fast with one hand contrived with the other to get good hold of a drooping branch of the willow; then she cried twice for help.

She was chilled; she knew her strength could not last long, and, worse than all, Lady Lingard had swooned, and so was a dead weight. Her brain was reeling, her senses seemed to swim, when there came the welcome sound of steps, and she heard like one in a dream, "Hold on a minute, whoever you be," and nerved herself to the final effort.

As through a mist she saw two men approaching, knew the same vague way they were the lodge-keeper and his son; then she knew no more until she opened her eyes in her own room to find anxious faces bending over her. She felt weak and dazed, then the remembrance of the previous night's adventure (for it was now noon) returning, she said,—

"Nurse, did I succeed? Was I in time to save her?"

"Yes, honey, yes, thank Heaven! But she's awful ill, and raving like a madwoman. Eh, dear! but we've been mortal anxious for you."

She was so tired and drowsy she made no reply, but presently fell asleep, not waking again until evening, when she felt so refreshed that but for nurse she would have risen.

The next day she was able to write to Jack and Rodney, and even to go downstairs, where she found her father in a state of deepest depression. Lady Lingard was ill of brain fever, and but very small hope was entertained of her recovery. She had no reason to love this woman, and yet, for her father's sake, in remembrance of Artie, she resolved to stay by her until she was convalescent, or—the end came. It was her duty, and Rodney was not the man to bid her shrink it. So she remained, taking her share in the nursing, tending her stepmother so kindly, so unflinchingly, that the servants declared Miss Estrella was an angel, and the hard woman being told, when sense returned to her, of all her goodness, turned her face to the wall, weeping for very shame and gratitude.

She was much aged and changed! it was palpable to all she could never be quite the same again; but the greatest metamorphosis of all was her affection for Estrella. She could scarcely endure her absence; the love she had all along denied her was now centred upon her, and her one idea was to marry the girl well, and to one who would permit frequent intercourse between them.

Charles Bolsover was the man she had all along chosen; she saw no reason now to alter her plans. He was rich, would have a title, and Sir Aylmer should bequeath all his possessions to his daughter, to the exclusion of his son—for with all the force of her nature she hated Jack, because it seemed to her distorted fancy that but for him Artie would have lived and reigned

She had always exaggerated his youthful follies to her husband; she alone had kept father and son apart by a cruel and skilful diplomacy; they never should be reconciled if it rested with her. Surely Sir Aylmer would be content to see his daughter's children about him—and Jack might drift apart from them all—his fate was a mere detail not worth considering.

When Estrella wrote saying,—"I cannot yet be spared, but my heart is with you always, and as soon as I may I will return." Jack with a groan remarked bitterly,—

"We have lost her, Revel; that woman will make her as worldly and false as herself; say goodbye to your sweetheart, you will not see her any more—or if you see her she will be changed."

Rodney Revel laughed,—

"I have no fear. It is not in Estrella to be false. Jack, old fellow, you are weak of faith; did she forget or forsake you when you were in your direst need? Do you think, friend, that but one true woman ever existed? If only for your dead wife's sake be juster in your judgment."

Jack stirred uneasily, feeling the force of Rodney's rebuke; but he said,—

"There was never another like Madge, and I have had very bitter experience."

"And are in consequence suspicious without a cause, Lingard? You look for a knave in every man you meet; and a flaw in every friendship. Come, this will never do! See, I, Estrella's lover, stake my all upon her loyalty—stake it confidently, knowing that she can no more be false than I."

Whilst this conversation was being held, Estrella, closeted with her stepmother, was listening with downcast eyes and thoughtful face to her words.

"It is for your good I speak," said my lady; "it is not meet that you should marry a mere nobody—a man no one could receive or even recognize." The girl smiled as she thought how very difficult it would be to ignore her lover. "Give him his *congé*, and make us happy by marrying Charles Bolsover. His grandfather positively dotes upon him, and is more than willing to receive you. You will never have such another chance."

Then said Estrella,—

"Mother, Rodney is dearer to me than life, but I wish to do what is right. I will make an agreement with you. I will consent to see Mr. Bolsover on conditions that I tell him of my engagement; then, if he is still wishful to call me wife, knowing my heart belongs to another—if he can change that love—I will say yes to his pleading."

But there was laughter on her lips, in her eyes, as she thought how impossible it would be for any man to wrest her from him.

Still, with that conditional promise, my lady was fain to be content.

Two days later she informed Estrella that Lord Bolsover and his grand-daughter were on their way to Castfort.

"I don't know much of the girl," she said, in conclusion, "but I fancy she is a 'blue-stocking'; I remember Lord Bolsover saying she was not a society girl, and had queer notions of duty, and all that."

"They are coming to approve me, I suppose?" remarked Estrella, calmly. "I hope I shall pass the ordeal satisfactorily. But where is my suitor?"

"He will follow in a few days. It is his wish you should first become acquainted with his grandfather and sister. Oh, my dear, I hope you will be wise. I have had much trouble; do not add to my burden by making an imprudent marriage. For all our sakes and your mad engagement!"

"If I can love Mr. Bolsover first and best, I will send Rodney away."

And my lady sighed as the dark eyes softened at thought of that absent sweetheart, who it was evident, despite his poverty, made her world.

Duly Lord Bolsover and his grand-daughter arrived. He was a tall, stately old gentleman, with an immense white beard and kindly eyes. She was small, scarcely exceeding four-feet-

eight, slender in proportion; she had brown hair, brown eyes, and was exceedingly pretty. There was a great deal of decision in her manner, despite its gay graciousness; and, almost unconsciously, Estrella compared her with the description Rodney had given of his sister.

It startled her a little when Lord Bolsover addressed her as Theo; and as she led her to her room she said,—

"You will think me very Irish when I say you remind me of some one I have never seen. But the description I had of her tallies exactly with your own; even her name is the same; she is called Theo!"

"Don't tell me I have a double; according to superstition nothing could be worse," laughed Miss Bolsover. "You, however, have left me one crumb of satisfaction; I am really named Theodora—Theo for brevity, so there may be a distinction and a difference. Who is this other Theo?"

"The sister of the man I am going to marry," answered Estrella, blushing hotly.

"You don't propose to commit bigamy," said Miss Bolsover, coolly; "and I understand that my brother's bride was to be found in Towers Castfort. Explain your riddle if you please."

"That is easily done. My people wish me to marry in my own station, but I have chosen for myself. My lover is the sub-editor of a bright little paper, and I do not suppose beyond his salary he has much to call his own. But he is most good, most noble; I never can reach up to his height; but I try to follow his steps if ever so feebly, and so far in the rear. He is Jack's friend, too, his best and dearest friend, and we intend presently to form a happy family together."

"All this seems distinctly unfair to Charles," said Miss Bolsover.

"Oh yes, I feel that. He is coming presently, and I will tell him all. I shall cast myself on his generosity, begging him to leave me unmolested, because whatever comes I cannot be false to myself and Rodney. It will be a sore disappointment to my father and Lady Lingard, but what they are pleased to call my folly, cannot hurt Mr. Bolsover, because never having seen me, he cannot love me."

"There is such a thing as affection at first sight," Theo remarked quietly.

"But I think that must be very rare indeed; we English are not very impulsive if you take us as a class."

Her companion laughed; then having smoothed her pretty hair, declared herself ready to go down.

All that evening whilst she chatted brightly to Sir Aylmer and my lady Lord Bolsover monopolised Estrella; he seemed to find pleasure in looking at her, listening to the music of her sweet voice and her gentle words.

"She is very beautiful," he said to himself. "How could her people have treated her with such barbarity in the past! And she is as good as she is lovely; if I were a young man I should even now be at her feet."

On the morrow when she walked with him he spoke to her of his grand-son; she flushed and grew restless, so that he added quickly,—

"You need not fear persecution from him; if he is told the whole truth, if he sees that you have thought only of your obscure lover, he will not press his suit upon you. Charles and I agree to differ upon many points, and three years ago he took his own way—a good if an eccentric one—I was angry then, although I did not cut him off with the proverbial shilling, and shall not even if he marries a little girl for whom he has a penchant. There, child, you must arrange matters between yourselves when he comes, only think before you leap; you have been reared in luxury."

"I have been a stranger to it for months now; but I do not fear work; I have learned to know that an idle life is an unhappy one. But what you have told me gives me fresh courage, and if Mr. Bolsover is a true man he will never cast off his sweetheart for me. Oh, it would be an unholy union! No, when our interview is over I shall go back to town—but if you would use your influence for Jack I should be so grateful, so

glad; you are a power with my father and Lady Lingard, they listen to you—"

"This is the consummation of impudence," he interrupted with a pleasant smile; "you are denying me my desire, and yet you ask my help."

"And I am sure you will give it," she answered, "because Jack has suffered much and sinned not at all. He only obeyed the dictates of his own heart, as I shall do. I do not believe that one's parents have supreme control of one's life, and if there were fewer marriages 'arranged' there would be less of shame and misery in the world;" and speaking thus she left him.

He watched her go with kind eyes.

"She will do. It is not always given to the old to know wisdom."

CHAPTER VII.

SINCE Estrella went away Jack had shared his friend's rooms; they were better furnished, larger and more airy, and Rodney had said,—

"We shall each miss her more than we can tell; let us be companions in misery, and so lighten each other's load;" and Jack, who hated his own society cordially, agreed.

He returned home late one evening to be informed by the landlady that Mr. Revel was still out, but that a young lady who called herself his sister had taken possession of the sitting-room, saying that she would wait for him.

Rather embarrassed Jack made his way to the apartment, and as he entered a young girl rose to meet him; in her manner there was not the least possible touch of confusion.

Extending a very small and neatly-gloved hand, she said,—

"You are Mr. Lingard, I seem to know you quite well, Rodney has so often spoken of you."

"And I have made your acquaintance through him," he answered, thinking how very frank were the dark eyes lifted to his, how bright the pretty mignon face; then he added, "I am pleased to know you personally, and only sorry that my sister is just now from town."

"I shall meet her presently," said the girl; "Rodney has promised that. And now tell me if I may make you some tea; would you be surprised to hear I am positively ravenous, and equally thirsty!"

"Not very," smiling. "I wish Revel had known of your coming, he would have rushed from the office to meet you; as it is you must let me be his substitute for awhile. Suppose I order up the tray."

"Do, please; then you must tell me where to find the different things you need. This is almost as good fun as a picnic, only if Rodney is very long in coming I must go; I am staying with a friend, and she will be anxious about me. Now, Mr. Lingard, where is the caddy?"

She fitted about so bright and merry, with such a frank smile, such helpful ways, that it was a pleasure to watch her, and presently they were sitting down at table together, chatting as freely as though they were old friends.

Then Rodney came in, starting with surprise when he saw his sister; she started up to meet him with a merry laugh,—

"I told you one day I should spring upon you thus, and being a woman of my word I have done so. How well you look; and she kissed him affectionately, "and how very late you are!"

"If I had guessed you were waiting me I had made more haste. Jack, this little sister of mine is at times a horrid nuisance, acting as she does on the impulse of the moment, bearing down on a fellow without warning. I am thankful that Estrella in no way resembles her;" but the look he bestowed upon her robbed his words of any unkindly significance.

They spent a merry evening. She was so bright, so diverting, yet so sympathetic, that Jack was rather sorry when she rose to go; and as he heard her whispering and laughing on the stairs he felt just a wee bit sore that Rodney should have two such girls as Estrella and Theo to love him. Then he thought of Madge, and his head drooped; there was none to fill her

place, none! he must live and die alone—and he might live for fifty years.

"Oh, my darling," he whispered to his desolate heart, "why did you leave me comfortless? Was not my love deep enough, strong enough to hold and keep you?"

It was a very depressed Jack that Rodney found upon his return.

"I am getting pretty sick of life," he said drearily. "When you and Estie are married I think I shall emigrate; I could work my passage out, and I wasn't built for a clerk. I cannot stand the dull routine much longer; if I—like you—had an incentive to work it would be different."

"Suppose you give the office a little longer trial, Jack; no one knows what may turn up in the meanwhile; and we have not been altogether unhappy since we joined lots. By the way, Theo wants us to take her to St. Paul's to-morrow morning—you can easily get off; the afternoon we will spend quietly at home; in the evening we will go to the Drury; I hear *The Sailor's Knot* is well worth seeing. The next day my sister returns."

"To her school! She scarcely spoke of them perhaps she has grown weary like myself of the dull routine, the stupidity of the whole thing."

"What then," cried Rodney, with a roar of laughter. "How little you know her! She is most enthusiastic and indefatigable; but she has the good sense not to talk shop on every available occasion. And now let us have no more of dumps so dull and heavy. To-morrow we will be glad and rejoice; but I am afraid I must leave you lonely whilst I travel back with Theo; I don't care for her to journey alone, although she has no fear."

So they spent a very pleasant day together, only poor Jack felt it would be duller than ever when Theo had gone, and she was a trifle quieter than usual when she started on her homeward journey.

"Well," said Rodney, "and what is your opinion of Jack Lingard?"

"I like him very much, and pity him too. Oh what a shame that he should be cast off by his people. I almost feel I hate them!"

He laughed.

"It would be rash to let Lady Lingard hear such an expression of feeling; but it is hard—poor old Jack."

They were well on their way now, and at Towers Castfort Estrella was sitting with her hands folded before her, her eyes downcast, listening to Sir Aylmer.

"Do it for my sake," he was urging, "Bolsover has been entreating me for Jack, and I have won your mother's reluctant consent to recall and reinstate him, on condition that you marry Charles. It is not a hard thing I ask of you; he is young, handsome, and of unstained character; he writes that he will marry you when and where you will, and to-day he is coming. For your brother's sake, Estrella, renounce your old lover. I am an old man—do not send me in sorrow to the grave."

"Ask anything else of me, father—not this! Oh, not even for Jack can I break faith with Rodney; and Mr. Bolsover can be but a very poor creature to wish to make me his wife, when he knows all—is perjurying himself in doing so—he too has another love. Theo told me—"

"Well—well, one cannot always have one's desire. It is expedient you should both forget the past, and I dare say you will not find it hard to do when you have met. Only, weigh well this thought, that on your answer depends Jack's future and my happiness."

So he left her, and she remained battling sorely with herself. It never could be her duty to sacrifice herself for father and brother; and why, oh, why had Theo deceived her with regard to her brother's nature and intentions?

Why had she left her alone to do battle? Was it because she feared her reproaches? Or was it part of a plot against her?

She was restless and unhappy. Rising, she paced to and fro, praying in her heart—

"Heaven help me! Heaven guide me!" and even as she breathed that petition, the door opened and Theo ran in.

"I have had the loveliest time," she cried gaily, "it had but one drawback, it was all too short. But, Estrella, what is the matter?"

"The matter! Everything is wrong; your brother has consented to fall in with our people's plans; he will marry me when and where I will, despite the knowledge of my engagement, and the remembrance of his own prior attachment. If I refuse, Jack remains an alien. Oh, it is too cruel! too cruel! and rather than be so very false, I will die. When I am face to face with Mr. Bolsover, I will tell him all the truth, appeal to him by his manhood to have mercy on me—for I never will give myself to him."

"Don't you think you had better wait until you have seen him?" asked Theo smiling; "he is waiting outside even now. I will send him to you," and before Estrella could recall her she had flown.

Torn by conflicting emotions Estrella stood white and drooping; so much depended upon her answer and this man's generosity.

She heard the door opened and shut, the quick firm steps approaching her, and, lifting her eyes with a desperate effort, met those of Rodney Revel fixed upon her full of love and tenderness.

With a little cry of utter rapture and relief she stretched out her hands to him, asking, in a queer, uncertain voice,—

"Have you come to save me from my fate! Did you doubt me? Ah, dear, not even for Jack's sake could I give you up! But they will be very angry that you have come upon the scene. Every moment I am expecting Mr. Bolsover's visit! Oh, take me away, I feel I cannot endure further persecution!"

He had her in his arms, was kissing the lovely upturned face passionately, for "after a fast a man hungers;" but he paused in his caresses now to say, with a gay laugh,—

"You need have no fear of trouble, I have your father's and Lady Lingard's permission to woo you!"

"You must be dreaming, or what witchcraft have you used to bring about so blessed a result?"

"No magic," smiling still. "The fact is, I have a confession to make. You have vowed never to marry Charles Bolsover, but if you are ever to be my wife you must break that vow, for I am he! Both your people and my grandfather have been the victims of an innocent hoax. Ay, open your eyes wide in unbelief. But I am going to give you satisfactory proof of my story. Only Theo was in the secret, and she kept it well. But kiss me first, sweetheart, and tell me that you don't think Charles Bolsover such a very dreadful creature after all!"

But Estrella held back a little.

"Do you deserve what you ask? You could have spared me so much pain, and you would not."

"I was cruel in order to be kind both to myself and you. We have tested our love and proved it worthy. We never can have a doubt of each other's disinterestedness. This trial—of patience to me, of trouble to you—has strengthened our mutual attachment, which now we know is founded on the rock of esteem. Briefly, my story is this, dear heart:—

"It was made known to me three years ago that my bride was chosen; I had only to ask and to have. My whole spirit revolted against such a bargain; and, being unacquainted with the circumstances surrounding you, I thought no nice girl would lend herself to such an arrangement. I utterly refused to play my part, declaring I would only wed the woman of my choice."

"I have a small annuity, independent of my grandfather, and with this I resolved to lead the life most congenial to me. I told him my plans. I was to find work, and afterwards to labour amongst those less fortunate than myself, as a means of recreation."

"He was very angry, but did not threaten me with disinheritance, but instead told me to go, declaring I should be weary enough of my self-chosen life in a couple of months. My project savoured to him of Radicalism, and that in itself is an abomination to him; moreover, Theo had

begun to help me wonderfully in the schools and the village."

"He thought that once rid of such a fire-brand as I she would resume the selfish life of an indolent society woman, but I knew better."

"Well, we parted, and one day it chanced I met Jack, and, without much difficulty, drew his story from him. He told me much about you, and I was interested, but I would not reveal myself to him. I was waiting to see you. Often I laughed when I heard myself spoken of in terms of detestation; it was such a farce."

"My name, after all, was partially my own, I being christened Charles Rodney, the Revel I assumed as alliterative. I did not wish to be hampered in my movements by my family prestige. Then, too, I had agreed with my grandfather not to drag our precious name through what he was pleased to term the depths of degradation."

"Then you came on the scene, and I may as well confess that you could exclaim with triumph 'Veni! Vidi! Vici!' for I went down before you at once, and I resolved in my heart to make you love me for myself alone."

"It is for you to say if you do so, and if you can forgive my innocent deception."

She trembled as she clung about him.

"I could not do less than love you with my whole heart. I was hurt at first to think you did not trust me all in all; but I see now I have nothing to forgive, and—there is no woman on earth so proud or happy as I am to-day."

He held her close to his true heart.

"You will have good news for Jack. I wonder how he will take it! And now, dear love, it only remains for me to make my confession to our friends unless Theo has already done so. Let us join them now," and drawing her hand within his arm he led her into the adjoining chamber where the elder members of the party were seated in bewildered conclave, whilst Theo her bright eyes all aglow with excitement and mischief was giving them a graphic account of the whole course of events.

As her glance rested on Estrella she rose, and with her hand frankly outstretched, said,—

"A thousand welcomes, sister; did not I say you had best wait until you had seen my brother before you decided to reject him!" and kissing the blushing girl she made way for Lord Bolsover.

"I am heartily glad to find your lover and my rogue of a grandson are one and the same; but a pretty time of perplexity and trouble he has given us. I wish you joy of your bargain, and trust your influence will soften his eccentricities."

"The whole affair is characterised by absurdity," snapped my lady, but Sir Aylmer, having congratulated his daughter, stole away to send a message of forgiveness and recall to his boy Jack.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE preparations for the wedding went on merrily; Jack had not yet returned home, but would be present at the ceremony, although he rather dreaded the ordeal, for Lady Lingard with a flash of her bitter spirit had written him acruel letter, saying that his return was an aggravated insult to her, declaring that his father's mind must be failing to allow him to forgive or forget his offences.

Her heart was hot against him, and she occupied her mind with brooding over what might have been had Artie lived.

She saw herself outliving her husband, reigning for years as the mistress of Tower Castfort; in course of time her boy would marry; but she would still be queen. His bride should be a docile girl, chosen by herself, willing, nay, grateful to leave affairs in the capable hands of her indulgent mother-in-law.

Now all her dreams had come to nothing. When Sir Aylmer went over to the great majority she knew that Jack would never endure her presence in the house; she would have to remove to the more modest demesne reserved for the Dowager Lady Lingard.

She would have the mortification of seeing his

wife rule in her stead for of course he would marry again—if ever she entered the Tower it would be on sufferance, a tolerated not a welcomed guest.

She set her teeth hard, and a strange look came into her eyes. Oh! this must not! should not be! surely she was strong enough to avert such a calamity!

Estrella saw with vague fear how changed she was in ways and mien; she seemed wasting away as though some inward fire consumed her, and often she would hear her communing with Artie, but she said nothing fearing to alarm her father.

Then came the bridal day; bright, balmy, an ideal morning for such an event. Jack was there chatting with Theo who was at her best. All the dote of the country had been bidden, and the gathering was a goodly one.

Both bride and groom would have preferred a quieter wedding, but they had been over-ruled by their respective families.

All eyes were fixed upon Estrella, as gowned in purest white, her beautiful face pale with emotion, she issued from the church leaning upon Rodney's arm, and never had a groom looked less embarrassed, or more happy; for he had won his heart's desire, and by nature he was not diffident. Then came Theo with *riante* face and smiling eyes; a whisper passed through the people that here was a proper bride for Mr. Jack; the whisper reached Sir Aylmer, and his look showed it was neither a new nor an unpleasant thought to him.

At four o'clock the wedded pair left for Dover, en route to France, and then for the first time that day they found themselves alone. Drawing his bride nearer, Rodney said,—

"Beloved, in our happiness we must not forget the poor and humble friends amongst whom we have toiled together. It is necessary now I should resume my rightful position; but they know me too well to allow this to make any marked difference between us. You will help me in the furtherance of my work."

"Yes, oh yes! we can work on a freer, greater scale. You first taught me the dignity of labour. I could not return to the old empty life. Your plans shall be mine, I will follow where you lead, my husband and my love."

To go through life thus together seemed a great and glorious thing to her. The magnitude of the task before her kept her humble, and as she lifted her mouth to him she thanked Heaven from her heart for the blessings so freely showered upon her.

"It was all for the best," she said cheerfully a little later. "I used inwardly to murmur at my lot, but if Lady Lingard had always been kind, if I had never had occasion to leave home, I should never have known your true worth, and it may be you never would have given me your heart."

At Castfort things did not go very pleasantly after Estrella's departure; my lady's moody bitter ways harassed Sir Aylmer, and made home wretched to Jack. Theo and her grandfather remained, otherwise the young man would have found existence unbearable.

Both Lord Bolsover and Sir Aylmer regarded their friendship with favourable eyes, hoping it would develop into a warmer feeling, and one day they discussed the desirability of such a marriage within my lady's hearing. She listened with whitening face and writhing body. Once or twice she rose from her seat as if to scream out her protest against such an arrangement; but she was strong enough to restrain herself; only when they had left the room empty she stole from the alcove where she had been hidden, and watching them from the window with wild eyes hissed,—

"You blind fools! I am I to count for nothing! Is that man to have all good things, whilst my children lie dead and forgotten—the dearest and sweetest of them all, nothing but a memory to his dotard father! It shall not be. I, myself will come between them and their plans. I myself am Nemesis; let them have a care how they offend."

That night she was so strange in speech and manner that even Theo, who regarded her vagaries with something akin to scorn, felt some-

what alarmed, and was glad when the hour for retiring arrived.

Being weary she soon fell asleep, and the whole house was sunk in silence. Every light was extinguished save my lady's, which was turned low. She sat like some living statue; awaiting the hour for action, never so much as moving a limb, until she was assured that all was safe. Then, taking her lamp, she stole noiselessly through the corridor in the direction of Jack's room.

Cautiously turning the handle she entered to find him lying fast asleep, an open book fallen on the floor beside him. Setting down her lamp she glared at him with such fiendish hate, such murderous intent, that he seemed to become conscious of her presence, and moved uneasily.

Quick as lightning she drew a knife—a common table knife—from her loose hanging sleeve, and held her hand aloft to strike.

In that moment he woke, grasped her intention, and endeavoured to wrest the weapon from her, but she was too quick for him; he saw the blow descending, gave one shout for help, then with a gurgling sound fell back amongst the pillows, the knife deep in his side, and the blood flowing in an awful red stream across the snowy bed.

Lady Lingard stood watching, the lust of blood in her eyes. She did not even attempt to escape when sounds of hurrying feet broke the echoes.

The first to enter was Sir Aylmer. One glance served to reveal the ghastly truth; with a heart-broken groan he reeled towards the bed.

"Jack!—my boy Jack! is he dead?"

"I hope so," answered my lady, with a strange laugh. "I meant to kill him. He will never wear my dead boy's honours now, or bring home a wife to dethrone me;" then she turned, and, laughing still, retraced her steps, whilst the servants fell back before her, she was so awful with that look in her eyes and in her blood-stained gown.

By morning, all the county knew that my lady had attempted her step-son's life, that although he yet breathed very little hope was given as to his recovery. Later it leaked out that medical men had testified to her insanity, and she was under strict surveillance, whilst Sir Aylmer lay prostrate with grief and shame.

Estrella and Rodney came hurrying home to be met by Theo in the hall.

"I could not leave Aim to the mercy of strangers," sobbed the girl. "You will let me stay and help you to nurse him. Oh Estie, it is all so very, very terrible. If he should die, and so little hope is given, my heart will break."

Weeping, Estrella kissed her.

"Poor child! poor child! it is hardest of all for you," she said.

She had not guessed before the true state of Theo's feeling for Jack, the girl having been strong to hide it, until grief and anxiety betrayed her.

"Let us hope for the best; dear Jack had always a splendid constitution, and all that can be done will be. Oh that terrible woman! dear little Artie was mercifully spared the knowledge of her true character; it seems incredible that he should have been her child."

Unflinching Estrella and Theo nursed Jack back from the very gates of death; long he hovered on the border-land; but, as his sister said, he had a fine constitution which had never been spoiled by excesses; and at last his strong vitality asserted itself; he began slowly to mend. But he was yet too weak and ill to talk, only to reassure him Estrella told him of Lady Lingard's removal and his father's rapidly recovering strength.

She told him, too, of Theo's goodness and unceasing care, then left him to digest that part of her information at his leisure.

He was very thoughtful when she had left him; he was by no means vain, and yet it seemed scarcely feasible that if she had not a deep regard for him Theo would have worn herself to a shadow for his sake.

(Continued on page 381.)

LEILA VANE'S BURDEN.

—30:—

CHAPTER XVII.

MARGOT returned to the house after that chance meeting with Giles Bernadine in a far brighter spirit than that which had assailed her when she had sallied forth from it for her solitary excursion in the woods. True woman as she was, Margot had felt all her sympathy and her desire to help and comfort rush out to the young man about whom she had heard so much, and who had impressed her so quickly with a faith in his integrity, and an admiration for his pride.

The courage with which Giles Bernadine had determined to face his ruined future inspired Margot with a new courage also. She took herself to task as she walked quickly back through the grounds. After all, what was her trouble? Something wholly of her own making.

Julian Bernadine had never given her the smallest conscious encouragement to associate him closely in her thoughts. She knew that he liked her cordially, and that he admired her bright fresh beauty, he was her friend, a staunch, frank friend, but beyond this, had Margot been endowed with even a fair share of her sister's vanity she could never have said that Julian had ever expressed in word, or look, or deed, a wish to let their friendship ripen into anything deeper or more tender.

"And therefore," Margot said to herself with a touch of anger mingling in with her modest shame, "I am really an abominable creature! because I have dreamed dreams that can never be; I am ready to cry my eyes out because they do not become realities—thank Heaven!" the girl added passionately to herself—"Thank Heaven, my folly is something that no one will or can ever know but myself! I should die if I thought anyone could even imagine what has passed in my mind. What a life Cis would lead me. It would be after all an everyday occurrence with her, for she is always having a new romance. But I have been so different up to now, it is a case of the mighty being fallen indeed!" Margot added to herself with a little sigh, and yet with a smile, "but," was her final thought, "but it is all over now. I shall bury my dream—and in a little while, perhaps, I shall forget it—it does not sound very easy to do that, but all things are possible in this world—and will and determination can go a great way to help these possibilities."

As if to put her strength and will to the test Margot came upon her host just as she was about to pass through the conservatory and seek the side staircase to her room. The girl smiled at Sir Julian with all her accustomed brightness. Had his mind not been running so fixedly in another groove the young man might have noticed that Margot's colour was not so brilliant, and that her eyes had a little weary look in them, but these faint outward signs of her mental struggle were fortunately lost upon him.

"I have been in the woods—and I have had an adventure," she cried, with half a laugh; then growing sober instantly. "I have made friends with your cousin, Sir Julian."

"Ah!" Julian was aroused at this, "I am glad you met him, Miss Margot. You are the very element he needs just now. You will brace him up and give him the brightness that this miserable business has blocked out of his life for so long. I was going to ask you to come and see him. I thought that we together might bring him to reason, and urge him to give us the proofs so necessary to his complete vindication!"

Margot winced a little at the calm easy utterance of those two words "we together," how much they might have conveyed to her, how bitterly empty they were.

She gave him another smile.

"Do let me help you in any way I can, Sir Julian," she said eagerly, hurrying her words a little. "You do not know how glad I shall be to do anything in my power. Now that I have seen Mr. Bernadine, I can understand better all you have felt and wished about him; it would be so

wholly impossible to associate dishonour or disgrace with such a man!"

Julian grasped Margot's hand with extra warmth.

"It does me good to hear you speak like that. Poor Giles! You don't know how troubled I am about him. I cannot get the remembrance of his father's grief out of my mind, Miss Margot. We must clear him of this tangle."

Margot let her hand rest in his firm grip.

"We must," she said bravely, though the beating of her heart made her cheeks and lips grow pale. "Have you seen Leila just lately?" she asked him hurriedly, after a little pause.

Julian shook his head, his eyes had an expression half wistful, half eager, which she understood so well, "she is in her room, I believe," he said.

There came an added pain into Madeleine Sylvester's heart at this moment—it was a pain for him. She could foretell his future so easily, and she knew that he must suffer.

"Leila is blind to him as she is to all the world," the girl said to herself, with a pang, "it is hard for him now. The uncertainty, the hope that is half fear, but it will be much, much harder when he shall speak. Love and marriage are things that have no place in Leila's thoughts. Her pride is as great, if not greater, than the pride of that poor boy I have just left."

"I very much fear that her father's wrongdoing will stand like a barrier for ever in her path."

And while Margot was thinking this, Julian was talking eagerly of Leila. It was a joy to him to speak of her to Margot. He knew so well that the girls' love for one another was as deep and true as it was beautiful. He found himself preserving an uneasy silence about this particular guest with his mother.

Mrs. Bernadine's attitude now towards Leila was almost admittedly hostile.

She was clever enough to found this attitude on the safest of all bases. She objected to Leila's manner with her father.

"Oh! of course, I know it is the modern fashion. All children are permitted to adopt a rude brusque way with their parents, especially young people who go in for being learned and independent as Miss Vane does, but it is a manner that is peculiarly abominable to me, and one which stamps a person at once, in my opinion, as selfish and wrong."

This tirade had been spoken against Leila only that very morning in Mrs. Bernadine's bedroom, when her son had run in for his short morning's chat. It had been called forth as an answer to a remark he had made, half in earnest, half in amusement, about a letter he had received from Leila's father.

"Vane is determined to let me have a good bargain. Mother, I see I shall have to buy that back, otherwise I shall have no peace."

Mrs. Bernadine had frowned slightly at this remark. She was most charming to look upon, sitting by her fireside in a dainty peignoir of pink silk with flounces and frills of lace.

His mother's extraordinary youthfulness always impressed Sir Julian afresh in such a moment as this.

"You need not, of course, buy the horse if you don't want to, Julian," she answered; "Mr. Vane is assuredly too much of a gentleman to coerce or urge you in any way."

"Oh! he is a gentleman right enough," Sir Julian said, assenting eagerly; "and handsome, too, eh, mother?"

Mrs. Bernadine assented to this gravely. "Handsome and troubled, too," she said; "but I can quite understand that the life of such a man must be shadowed and disappointed with such a daughter," and hereon followed those harsh words about Leila's conduct to her father.

Sir Julian listened as patiently as he could. He had made a vow not to discuss Leila with his mother; but his was essentially a just nature, and Mrs. Bernadine's unsympathetic discussion of Leila would have roused his sense of justice had his feelings been quite different, where she was concerned, to what they were.

He had said very little, but that little had

been to the point, and had been in Leila's defence.

"Mr. Vane is a charming and a handsome man; but one wants something more than looks and charm in the ordinary course of life. I should fancy that Mrs. Sylvester was in a position to judge pretty accurately where Mr. Vane and his daughter are concerned, mother. She has known them intimately for years, and her allegiance is all given to Miss Vane."

Mrs. Bernadine had flushed at her son's cold tone which was so unusual in her ears.

"The girl is a clever *poesse*; of course, it suits her very well to cultivate the Sylvesters. You forget their relative positions, Julian. The friendship and sympathy of the Sylvesters can be, and no doubt is, of material value to Miss Vane."

Julian had risen suddenly.

"Mother!" he said—the word escaped him in an involuntary way, it was pregnant with rebuke and with regret.

Mrs. Bernadine started a little, Julian's look in this moment was severe enough to have alarmed her in a more normal condition; but she was irritated, jealous, hot with anger against Leila; she was a distorted likeness of her former gentle and tender self.

"I am sorry I cannot find it possible to share your infatuation for Miss Vane," she had said, coldly; "she certainly does not seem to exercise a good influence upon you, Julian, for your manner never was so rough to me before this girl came into our lives. Sometimes it seems to me as if you were anxious to forget that I am your mother, to forget all our past, our sufferings, and our joys; it—it hurts me very much."

The tears had come here to bear witness to the truth of this statement, and Julian had knelt beside the pretty figure in the pink peignoir, and had caressed it in the old fashion which had been so efficacious in the past.

"Mother—little mother—how can you say such things, and why do you put such ideas into your head? How could it be possible that I should change to you. Dearest, promise me not to say or think anything so wrong."

The cloud had passed away, and Mrs. Bernadine had replaced her tears with smiles, but there had rested a heavy sense of depression upon Julian all through the rest of the day. It was with him still as he talked to Margot of the girl who was so dear to them both.

"I am afraid Miss Vane's visit to Wilton Crobie has not done her as much good as I had hoped it would."

Margot stopped to admire an orchid. They were sauntering about the conservatory.

"Leila cannot be better, Sir Julian, while she has so much mental care."

It was the beginning of a confession and of a warning too. Margot knew that Sir Julian had gathered in a vague sort of way that Eustace Vane was "unsatisfactory," but she knew also very well that the young man had not the faintest idea of how very unsatisfactory Mr. Vane really was.

"She works too hard, you mean, Miss Margot?"

Margot passed on to another orchid. She nodded her head.

"In every way. It is not merely the strain of her writing, though that is enough to wear out the brain of any ordinary person it is," Margot paused, she coloured deeply, her voice took a more hurried tone. "Sir Julian," she said, "I feel as though I were betraying my friend in saying so much; but oh! I am so troubled about her—so anxious. I want to see her well, happy, bright and beautiful as she ought to be; and yet—"

There was silence again, broken this time by the young man.

"I think I know all you would say, Miss Margot," he said, in a low voice. "You mean there are cares and anxieties which belong to stouter shoulders than hers!—that her young life is crushed by the selfishness of one who should protect and cherish her!"

"Worse than mere selfishness!" Margot said, half passionately. "It is criminal neglect and wickedness. He is an outrage on the very mean-

ing of the word father: and yet she adores him, or rather, I should say, up to a very short time ago she did adore him. She was blind—absolutely blind to all the cruelty, the crime—"

Margot felt so strongly here she was obliged to pause.

There was a rustic seat, hidden by some big palms, Margot sat down on it and Julian stood beside resting one foot upon the seat and his arm on his knee.

"Margot," he said, very quietly, the little unevenness in his tone alone marking the depth of his agitation, "Margot, what are we to do for her?"

He called her Margot quite easily. She was to him a sweet, sisterly creature, a consolation and a hope to him in his growing trouble.

The girl sat very silent, her head was bent, her eyes, hot with unshed tears, were fixed on the little basket she carried.

"Is she then as dear to you as she is to me, Julian?" she asked when she spoke. She followed his example and uttered his name calmly without any apparent effort.

"Dear!" The flush that rushed over his face seemed to bring something suffocating into his throat. "I have never known the meaning of life, or shadowed the possibility of happiness until she came near me. I love her, as I never thought to love, as I could never possibly love again!" He sat down beside Margot suddenly.

"My trouble is, my dread—she is so cold, so far away in her fragility and her sorrow. A thousand times a day I long to speak it all out—to tell her the burden of my love! To pray her to let me help her—to kneel before her and entreat her to put all her faith in me—to let me bear all her weariness! Tell me, Margot, am I right to hope—am I right to be silent or to speak?"

Margot was white, her hands were as two cold stones; yet not half as cold or as stone-like as the heart within her breast.

"Do not speak yet," she said as soon as she could open her lips and let her voice come naturally. "I—I know her so well, she has not even the remotest idea of this. It—it would shock her—it might do harm. Will you leave it to me, Julian? Will you put your future hope and happiness into my hands? Will you be guided by all I say, all I advise?"

"In everything," he answered promptly, "dear Margot. You have given me a touch of joy; you have not robbed me of all hope. You will help me to my happiness. If there is anyone in the world who can help me it is yourself. Are you going in now?"

Margot nodded her head.

"Yes, I have some letters to write, and some plans to make. My first move towards helping you, Julian, will perhaps seem a strange one to you. I am going to take Leila away. Yes, we will go away; it will be best in every respect. You will tell me once again you trust me before I go!"

He repeated the words fervently, and he stood watching Margot as she passed out of sight, with a glow in his heart such as he had never felt before in all his life.

Leila and her love seemed drawn nearer to him in this moment, and hope, which had burned as yet only in a half despairing way, burst forth within him as a steady flame. The cloud had gone from his face as he turned and walked down to the woods to see his cousin.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARGOT was true to her word.

That same evening she had talked matters over with her mother.

"Leila simply cannot remain here now that her father is coming. I want to take her away!"

"You are a very independent young person, I must say," Mrs. Sylvester said, in her brusque, good-natured way; "and where do you want to go, may I ask?"

"You may," Margot laughed, "we shall go to the sea, mother dear."

"And you think Leila will consent to this?"

Mrs. Sylvester avoided looking at her girl's face, so white, so brave. Her mother's heart had a pang in it; Margot's secret was so easy for her to read.

Not by so much as a hint, however, did she mean to let Margot know she knew so much. Margot was built of the same stuff as herself.

"And she will fight it out; but she must have time." Out loud she asked, "You think Leila will go!"

"I am sure she will—if she thinks it is to do me good."

"Oh! so you want change of air again, do you?" Mrs. Sylvester pinched the fair cheek. "I cannot say truly, my dear Margot, that I think you look as if you required it!" This in her driest manner.

Margot laughed again.

"Never mind, you must pretend to see what doesn't exist."

"And you want to go without me?"

"I never want to go anywhere without you, darling mother; but I think this time we shall try and manage without you. Bates will take care of us, and we will go to dear old Wavetone—we shall be perfectly safe there. I am sure we could get our usual rooms without any difficulty."

"Have you spoken to Leila?"

"I am going to her now; good-night, mother dear. You are so sweet. You always let me do just exactly as I want to do!"

"I am a very unusual mother, far too good for any ordinary girl," Mrs. Sylvester said with her usual touch of humour in voice and words. "Good-night, Margot, I suppose you will announce your plans to Mrs. Bernadine early in the morning?"

"Oh! of course. I am afraid it will be more or less of a satisfaction to her to get rid of our poor Leila. Mother, isn't it unfortunate she should have taken such a dislike to Leila?"

Mrs. Sylvester nodded her head.

"Especially since her dislike is not shared by her son, Margot. Have you got any sort of matrimonial plans in your little head for these two?"

Margot answered by a question.

"Do you think it looks so hopeless then, mother dear?"

Mrs. Sylvester's reply was terse enough.

"Very," was all she said, but as Margot came forward to kiss she added more. "I see some complications looming ahead, my Margot. You know I am something of a prophet, so be prepared!"

That was all Mrs. Sylvester would say, however, and as Margot and Leila took their departure quite early the next day, there was no time for questioning or gaining information.

Leila had responded instantly to her friend's request that they should go away together.

"I don't feel well, Leila," Margot said, and she spoke truly. "I fancy the air of Wilton Crobie does not suit me exactly. I have a longing for some sea air. Wavetone is so quiet, so breezy, so delicious! Will you come with me and nurse me, Leila?"

"My dearest Margot! How can you ask such a thing. You are certainly not looking well—let us go at once, I am glad to go."

So it was arranged, and before noon the next day the two girls with one of Mrs. Sylvester's faithful servants, started off in the May sunshine to wend their way to the sea—and the rocks and the fresh sea winds.

Julian Bernadine went with them to the station. His heart sank a little as he thought of the blank there would be in the house with Leila gone—but he consoled himself with a hope that before long they would meet, when perchance the distance that separated them now would have grown less, and the joy of mingling his life with hers would have become more possible, more tangible.

"You will write to me, Margot," he found a moment to whisper before the train started. She smiled at him brightly.

"Of course, and perhaps, you might like to come and see what a lovely place Wavetone is!"

the girl said, with a demure glance upwards. "You will receive a welcome, of that you may be very sure!"

Julian thanked her with a hand-grip; then he went up to Leila, already seated in the carriage.

"I want to give you a present, Miss Vane. I wonder if you will accept it."

Leila's delicate face coloured almost as deeply as his.

"A present; I—!" She broke off as soon as she saw what nature of gift it was he was offering to her. "Oh!" she said, hurriedly, "your old pocket case—but can you part with it, Sir Julian? I am touched at your thought—but am I not robbing you?"

"Then you are not vexed! You do not refuse to accept it?"

The delight in his heart illumined his face. Leila had a sudden, strange stirring at her heart—a nervousness that was almost a pleasure, as she looked for an instant into his eyes, and heard his voice.

"Vexed! refuse! How could I?" she said, hurriedly. "I—I thank you very much, Sir Julian. I shall prize your gift always. It shall be a souvenir of my visit to Wilton Crobie."

"You will find it useful to describe in one of your novels," he said, his delight at her graciousness growing deeper and deeper, and then he had to turn away and speak to Margot again, and to the guard who was to take care of the young ladies.

"I shall be with you very soon, and I will bring Giles," he said, in Margot's ear.

"Ah, yes, do," Margot cried, heartily.

Her cheeks flushed at the thought—they waved hands—Leila's big, violet eyes looked once more into the honest depths of his eyes, and then the train moved, and they were gone.

They were so happy together at the little coasting village which Mrs. Sylvester had patronized ever since her children had been babies; happy despite the fact that both their young hearts were troubled with a sorrow that would not be wholly put out of sight.

"All my days I have longed for this. Leila is it not true—it is always the unexpected that happens! Confess, did you ever imagine I should have been clever enough to conjure you away, just by our two selves in this fashion?"

"I confess it," Leila said. "I certainly never did!"

Her eyes went fondly to Margot's face, that wore its usual healthy and bright look. A fortnight sitting out in the sun and the air had tanned them both.

"It is beautiful, Margot—so lovely that I want to stay here always."

"Let us, as the children always say," and Margot laughed gaily. "I will build a house just for us two, out here on those rocks, and we will live in it by our two selves and no one else."

"It sounds a little selfish, Midget," Leila observed.

She was sitting in a low chair, with her writing pad upon her knee. A great flood of inspiration seemed to have come over her since she had been down at the sea. Her pen had travelled miles, so Margot declared, in the fortnight of their stay. The weather had been delicious, balmy and mild, more like July than May. The girls had simply lived out of doors.

Margot's writing consisted of certain letters which she sent to Wilton Crobie; some to her mother, some to Julian Bernadine. He had not paid his promised visit, but he would be down now any day, and Giles Bernadine would come with him to recuperate after a sharp touch of illness brought on by cold acting on a system that had been overtaxed altogether.

"Do send him to us, we will nurse him!" Margot had written, and only the morning before she had an answer—

"He shall be with you before the end of the week."

"We must be kind to this poor boy," Leila said in her soft way, when she heard the news.

"I wonder if Julian has done anything more about his trouble! I hope so," Margot added. "Mother has been writing very scrappy letters lately, she tells us absolutely nothing. Leila, you had a letter from her yesterday, had you not?"

Leila nodded her head; her face grew crimson for a moment.

"She gave me the most astonishing news, Margot—my father has paid his debt."

"Impossible!" was the word that jumped almost to Margot's lips, but she did not utter it; instead she rose and kissed Leila.

"Darling, I am glad. Now you are more at rest, are you not?"

Leila's face clouded.

"In one sense, Margot, but in another—" she paused an instant. "It is one trouble over, certainly, but there comes another to take its place. I am haunted; it is horrible to say it even to you, Midget—but—it is truth. I am haunted by one thought now—where and how did he get this money?"

Margot's face fell too. She could follow each separate phase and fear in such a thought, nevertheless she would not let Leila see this.

"Oh! I do not let us trouble about that, dear," she pleaded. "You know Mr. Vane has many ways of making money that you can know nothing about. He may have realized some property, he has some farms as he not! or he may have insured his life, or anything like that you know, darling. Try only to remember that he has done what you want, and that one cloud is lifted from your heart."

"My comforter," Leila said with a tender smile, and then they both lapsed into silence, whilst just beyond them the white flecked waves rolled and murmured and made music in the sunshine.

Margot opened her book and Leila took up her pen and with a resolute effort banished thought and continued her work.

They were both deeply engrossed, when a firm footstep crunching on the beach made them turn.

"What a fright you gave us," Margot cried, springing up and bending over her chair, ostensibly to put it straight, in reality to hide her hot cheeks, as her eyes met Julian's.

He was not looking at her. Even when his hand clasped hers he was looking at Leila, who had not risen but had turned with a half startled expression in her beautiful eyes.

What welcome would she give him! the man asked himself with a beating heart.

"I hope I did not frighten you very much," he said, apologetically.

Leila smiled and coloured a little.

"It is Margot who is nervous, not I."

"Where is your cousin?" Margot broke in quickly. "Don't dare to say you have come without him, Sir Julian. We have been preparing all our resources to nurse him back to health and hope again."

"He is at the hotel, too tired with the journey to come down here just now. I am delighted to tell you that I have the very best news to give you concerning him."

Julian's face was in fact alive with pleasure. Margot clasped her hands.

"You have cured him! Oh! Julian I am glad!"

Julian thanked her with a smile.

"Yes, he is cleared, though not by me. One of the men whose name he refused to give up at the cost of so much, touched, I suppose, by the boy's honour and courage, wrote to the Colonel of his regiment, telling him all that occurred, naming the culprit in strict confidence, and exonerating Giles altogether. It has been the reaction after so much agitation that has made him so ill. He will, of course, return to his old place. A reconciliation has already been made between his father and himself. There is nothing now but for us to try and give him back his strength and make him forget."

"I will go and begin at once!" Margot cried. "Leila you will entertain Julian while I am away!"

She was fleeting across the beach almost before she had finished speaking; and Julian was left alone with the woman he adored; but who was so



"MARGOT, WHAT ARE WE TO DO FOR HER?" SAID JULIAN, MAKING AN EFFORT TO CONTROL HIS FEELINGS.

ignorant of his adoration. He took Margot's chair.

"You are still working, Miss Vane," he said, his eyes magnetised by the purity, the sweetness of her beauty. Never had she looked so lovely as now in her little gown of blue linen, a broad brimmed hat shading her brow and eyes.

He noted at once that she had a less fragile air than when he had parted with her at the station.

"I have had an inspiration!" she answered him with a smile.

"You must not overtax your strength!"

"Oh, no! Margot will not let me do that, she is a tyrant; but, what a sweet one!"

"She is, indeed, a sweet woman," Julian said; but his eyes were still drinking in the fascination of the fair young woman before him. He spoke mechanically, and after that speech there was a moment's silence between them.

"Mrs. Bernadine is well I hope," Leila said as she began to fold up her writing materials.

"Quite well, thank you. Younger than ever, I think," Julian said with a laugh which, somehow, to Leila's sensitive ears sounded troubled. He bent forward here, and addressed her eagerly.

"I have some news for you, Miss Vane—news that may interest you more deeply than most!"

Her eyes dilated with the return of fear that came upon her.

"Yes!" was all she could say.

He noticed her changed look, and the manner in which her hands closed together.

"Oh! not bad news—at least, not bad to you; it deals with that man, Henry Bartlett—he is dead!"

"Dead!" Leila repeated the word in a dazed way, as if hardly comprehending its full value and meaning. "Dead—when? How do you come to know this?"

"I was told of his death only two days ago; I imagine my information is quite true. Does it distress you?"

Despite all the frankness and fairness of his

nature Julian Bernadine could not resist a touch of hot jealousy here for this man, who had the power to wake such agitation in her heart.

Leila shivered a little.

"No, no," she murmured; "no, only inasmuch as death is so terrible to all to whom it comes, it was the surprise. I did not know. I did not think of this. I—I can hardly realise it yet."

There was another silence between them. He sat back in his chair and watched. Her face was turned seawards, it was very pale, a whole volume of emotion was written on it, on the proud white lips round the beautiful eyes.

Julian's heart beat wildly as he watched her. Once again he was assailed by questionings. What was this man to her, and what was the link that had held them together?

Leila, as though divining the thoughts in his mind, turned her head and looked at him in an eager earnest way, in an eagerness that was exquisitely sweet to him because he saw that it was wholly unconscious, and because in that very unconsciousness, he saw, enshrined the germ of that interest, that divine sympathy, which would develop into love.

"He was a bad man, a cruel man; but he is dead. I will try to forget that he ever lived, Sir Julian."

The words came hurriedly from her lips.

The man bent forward. He almost stretched out his hand and touched her.

"He did you a wrong? Will you answer me one question. Was that wrong a hurt to—to your heart or your pride?"

Leila looked at him a moment without understanding; then her face was dyed with colour, her eyes dropped beneath his gaze.

"If it was a hurt to my pride!" she answered him, humbly; all her independence, her coldness gone from her strangely.

She lifted her eyes to him in a startled fashion, when the exclamation, "Thank Heaven!" dropped from his lips; but she had to bend her head

once again, for a bewildering sensation had come over her, making her heart beat in her throat, and yet sending a thrill as of new life throughout her being!

(To be continued.)

A SHIP canal from Bordeaux to Narbonne, connecting the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, is one of the coming public enterprises. The distance is three hundred and twenty miles, and the breadth is to be one hundred and forty-four feet at the narrowest, and two hundred and fifteen feet at the widest points, with an average depth of about thirty feet. There will be twenty-two locks, with fall from twenty to sixty feet. In order to avoid delays, and give ample space for navigation, there will be, at intervals of about eight miles, sidings three-quarters of a mile long. The locks will be eighty feet wide and six hundred and fifty-five feet long. The craft using this canal will be towed by fixed engines. The cost of the canal is estimated at one hundred and fifty millions of dollars.

This famous Japanese lacquer is got from the *Rhus vernicifera* or *urushinaki*, a tree about thirty feet high and forty inches round the trunk. It yields most of the lacquer in its eighteenth year. The gum is obtained by making horizontal cuts in the bark in summer, and collecting the milky juice, which turns brown on exposure to the air. The lac is purified by filtration, and bleached in the sun. About twenty different kinds are in the market, and of various colours, black, azure, vermillion, and so on. The colours are, of course, produced by pigments, and gold or pearl imitations are made by mixing gold dust or mother-of-pearl powder with it. The lacquer is applied with broad brushes of stiff bristle enclosed in wood, and cut in the same way as pencils when the bristles wear down to the wood. The lacquer is unaffected by acids or spirits, and bears a high temperature—in fact, it rather improves with time.



ANNE LOVINGLY RAISED THE WASTED FORM OF RAOUL AND POINTED TO THE PICTURE ABOVE THE MANTELPIECE.

DR. DURHAM'S DAUGHTER.

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CHAPTER XV.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF LADY ANNE GUEST.

"There are things of which I may not speak;
There are dreams that cannot die;
There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,
And bring a pallor into the cheek,
And a mist before the eye."

SEPTEMBER 25TH, 18—. A whole week has gone by since I was at Dr. Durham's house.

Yes, it is just a whole week from to-night since I beheld in the face and form of that young stranger there, in whose society I then found myself for the first time, a ghost that belongs to the years which are gone!

The shock and surprise of it all were indeed rather terrible at first!

And his face still haunts me. The serious questioning look in those beautiful eyes of his still haunts me. In the library he looks down at me, watches me intently, from the large sombre canvas of Raoul's portrait; and I sit and gaze at my brother's pictured features whilst my head aches and my brain grows very weary, until at last I turn away in sheer bewilderment and despair, perplexing and distressing myself with wildest conjectures that I dare not shape into uttered words!

Perhaps indeed I could not, even though I would.

I want very much to let Raoul know something about it all, but somehow scarcely like to speak of it to him just yet.

A dozen times or more have I been on the point of opening my lips on the subject; and a dozen times or more, however, has my heart failed me, and I have perforce held my peace.

The wretched state of his health renders him at times exceedingly irritable and moody. It is so rarely that he is either willing or able to converse freely with anyone.

It strikes me as being odd, nay, more than odd, I think, that Dr. Durham himself should never have told me anything concerning this young Mr. Lynne.

I cannot understand it. His omitting to do so is certainly strange; because he knows so well the picture over the library mantelpiece—he cannot have failed to discern in it a likeness at once so remarkable and convincing!

Nevertheless Dr. Durham says nothing. What can be the interpretation of such reticence and reserve—more especially towards me?

I fancied, however, the other evening, when the young man was presented to me, that something in the nature of a tacit understanding existed between the two—the doctor and himself—mere fancy, perhaps—I do not know.

Yet Dr. Durham individually was obviously ill at ease; whilst the whole bearing and manner of this Mr. Lylph Lynne were singularly arrogant, it struck me—to say no more.

Can it be—can it be within the range of earthly possibilities that he, this strange young man, knows anything, that Dr. Durham himself knows anything?

I have indeed a great mind to speak openly to Dr. Durham when he calls here to-morrow—but no, perhaps it would be the better and wiser course to wait patiently for awhile.

It is well that so few people nowadays in Foxdale remember Raoul as he was years ago; his person, I mean, not the life he led—for that, alas! they seem to recollect always only too well—or tongues might be busy perhaps throughout the place.

If I could but feel certain that the act would not excite the curiosity or suspicion of my brother Raoul, I would at once have the portrait removed from the library to my dressing-room.

I am sorely uneasy in mind lest someone besides myself should ere long make the discovery that I now have made, and the matter be discussed and gossiped over in Foxdale.

Oh, that must not happen yet!

First, I must feel my way as it were, and find out things cautiously in the best way I can.

Mr. Lynne came to the neighbourhood in June, I remember; it is near the end of September now.

Consequently he has been a member of the Durham household for three entire months, and I never even saw him until a week ago!

I am troubled, I am very anxious.

The thoughts and fancies which beset me I cannot, I dare not frame into speech.

I must wait and watch for one of Raoul's "good" days, and then see what I can do—how far I may venture with him.

This bright mild weather, I am certain, has lately done him a world of good. I pray that it may continue.

I wish—oh, I wish that Dr. Durham, however, would look a little less grave. Am I, then, to understand that my dear brother is counted so very weak—is growing even yet weaker?

Ah, I pray Heaven not so!

Yesterday, I hear, the Kildares had their picnic in the Slingford Beeches.

Was this latest effort of Mrs. Kildare's, I wonder, crowned with any material success?

One can readily imagine, of course, the kind of success the lady at the Grange House is reckoning upon.

What open scheming, what glaring manoeuvring, on their part; and what a foolish, infatuated boy is that young George Stoke!

Ah, well, I must get Margery Durham to tell me all about that outing of theirs in the Slingford Beeches, since I was not of the party myself.

By-the-bye, Mrs. Patchett, they tell me, is gone away to Bristol—that she started by the coach to-day. What, I wonder, will my young favourite Margery do without that good creature of an aunt? And I wonder too how it is that I have always felt so warm an interest in the child!

I was always fond of Margery Durham.

September 30th.—Alas! the bright days with their mellow afternoons are vanishing fast.

Each one as it succeeds the other dawns more stormy and gray.

Autumn is setting in with chill and threatening winds unmistakably; they sob and howl at night in the most melancholy way. The gardens and park begin to look very desolate, and I dread the approach of winter on Raoul's account.

To-day he has appeared unusually listless—far from well indeed. I fear that he broods too much upon those wretched mortgages—just as he used to fret and grieve over the loss of Little Slingford Court and the sacrifice of Fieldfare Farm.

If only my own small fortune were sufficient, it should be parted with cheerfully to clear the estate, to lift the ever-pressing burthen from my beloved brother's mind!

But unhappily it is not enough, nor anything like enough; therefore I must submit to the pain of witnessing his pain, since it lies not in my power to alleviate his suffering.

He brightened, however, considerably when Dr. Durham called this morning—it is invariably so, though.

If anyone can cheer his last solitary days upon earth, it is Dr. Durham, it seems.

I have not yet spoken to Raoul touching the matter which is always, now, uppermost in my mind; and the days go by eventless.

This afternoon, after he and I had been for our quiet airing together—along the Slingford high-road and home through Lower Revelstoke, thus sparing Raoul, as I always contrive to do, the sight of either Little Slingford Court or the beautiful level pasture grounds of Fieldfare Farm—later, this afternoon, I drove by myself into Foxdale and called on Margery Durham.

She laughs, I find, at the notion of not being able to manage without her Aunt Susan, and declares that she is as happy as the day is long.

Somehow I cannot quite bring myself to believe the child.

Lately I have fancied there has been a change in her—a change that I cannot altogether define. Still I do not think that she is wholly the cheerful, light-hearted Margery of some three or four months ago.

After all, it may be only my fancy, of course—I am a fanciful woman, I know. Old maids indeed are generally so, one is told.

I did not see Mr. Lynne at the doctor's house to-day. Margery herself said that she believed he had just gone out into the village.

I tried to get up a little interesting chat about him; but as Margery Durham all at once grew curiously quiet, and I myself became stupidly nervous, the attempt was a failure on my part, and we spoke of something else.

I wonder greatly whether she and this young Mr. Lyulph Lynne get along well with each other—whether they are much together!

Sometimes, I admit, it has occurred to me that perhaps . . . Ah, this vagrant fancy of mine! Where will it end, whither will it ultimately lead me?

Just before I left Raoul for the night, he startled me very much—has rendered me, in fact, very sorrowful by raking up as it were an old trouble which we always do our best between us to keep well buried out of sight.

For it is a grievance that admits of no remedy. It is a skeleton, in truth, whose cupboard door by rights should never be opened, since the opening thereof and peeping in can do us no earthly good.

Raoul to-night however, opened it, for a wonder, of his own accord, and bared the grisly occupant.

"Anne," said he wearily, "I cannot drag on for ever like this, you know; you must see and acknowledge that. Do you never consider about what you will inevitably have to reconcile yourself to at my death? Because you see—

"I'm wearin' awa', Jean,
Like an aw wraith in thaw, Jean,
I'm wearin' awa'
To the land o' the dead."

"Oh, Raoul," I said, "do not talk of dying and—leaving me. I—I cannot bear it, dear!"

I clasped my hands tightly within a fold my gown, determined to keep down the unhappy tears if possible.

He is all that I have left in the world—it strains my very heart-strings to breaking to think of his going before me! But I know full well that it must be so, rebel and cry out as I may.

"It is childish, Anne," he said, irritably, "to speak in that way. I spoke myself pretty plainly to Durham yesterday—he has put me off hitherto, and I would not be put off with excuses and evasions yesterday—and asked him how much longer he thought I could last out.

"I was certain that I am a good deal worse than you know of, Anne, and I insisted upon being told the truth.

"Durham says he thinks—in his own mind he is sure enough, of course—that less than another year, six months perhaps, will about end it all, and then my place here will know me no more. Now, Anne, the question is: *What are you to do when I am gone?*"

"Oh, Raoul," I said again hopelessly; and began to cry bitterly in spite of myself.

"Poor patient old Anne," he said more tenderly than he usually speaks—"what, dear, is the use of crying? The matter must be met courageously at some time or another; the difficulty, sooner or later, overcome.

"Tears cannot hold me back from the grave's mouth, when death's icy grip is surely guiding me thither. You see—you see, Anne," uttering the words as though they were an unendurable agony, "I have no children, neither have you. When I am dead you must turn out. Foxdale Castle—the good old house itself and its demesne—is strictly entailed, as you know, and will therefore pass to Rupert Desborough, who went off, if you recollect, to the Colonies, Australia, New Zealand, or somewhere, nearly thirty years ago now, judging naturally, feeling confident then, of course, that—that either you or I would marry in the course of time; that his chance of ever succeeding to the Foxdale Castle estate was of the remotest and most unlikely in the world.

"If Rupert himself be dead, there are his heirs, I dare say, who can be discovered with a little trouble. But, there, you have heard all this before, Anne—know it of old—it is nothing fresh to you, dear.

"What I want you to do is to get yourself accustomed to the idea of quitting the old home and finding another elsewhere, since the parting from it—and I know it will be a wrench, my poor old Anne, I know it will—may be only a question of time and nearer at hand than you imagine.

"Little Slingford Court, you see, used to be called the Dower House of the Beaumanoirs; but that now—"

He checked himself with a smothered cry of anguish.

"Come, Anne," he said faintly, "leave me now. I am tired; I must try to sleep. Think over what I have said; and look the fact bravely in the face—ugly as it is. Sister, dear, good-night."

I leaned over him silently, my heart too full for words. And in silence I quitted his room, and in sadness came hither to my own.

I have just this moment seen Ashley in the corridor. He says that his master is now sleeping peacefully; so that is good news.

Perhaps his mind is all the easier for having spoken frankly to me of our troubles—poor Raoul!

Heaven knows my own soul is heavy enough within me!

October 4th.—To-day Dr. Durham stayed with us to luncheon, and Raoul, as is usual with him at such times, was at his brightest and best.

As I have said before, Dr. Durham's company cheers my brother always—it seems for him verily, the best of tonics.

When Dr. Durham rose to go, I accompanied him out to the hall-door, as I was anxious to speak with him alone.

"Dr. Durham," I said, as steadily as I could, "Raoul has told me what you honestly think of his condition. Need I say that I was more than distressed? I was grieved poignantly; and—and—forgive me—I do not consider that you have acted quite fairly and altogether kindly

towards me, keeping me in the dark as you seem to have done."

He looked inexpressibly pained at my hurt, reproachful tone.

"My dear Lady Anne," he said, "there is nothing, believe me, to apprehend as yet—not in the immediate present, please understand. Do not make yourself uneasy, I beg. If—"

"Nevertheless," I interrupted, sadly, "I think you ought to have told me all that you said to him. You did not part with your opinion willingly, I am well aware. But you should have taken me into your confidence, Dr. Durham, as first of all."

"I did not wish to alarm you, to pain you too soon," he answered, gently.

I held out to him my hand. He grasped it at once.

"Promise me now," I said, earnestly, "that you will let me know the instant you discern another change in him of any kind. I—I shall hold myself prepared for anything. I can bear it. I am strong. Do not again withhold bad news from me for fear of giving me pain."

And so he promised me; and I know that he will keep his word.

I feel more satisfied, infinitely less anxious now that I have spoken plainly to Dr. Durham.

After all, he was silent out of pure sympathy and kindness of heart.

Oh, friend of many years! You are in truth a tried and worthy friend!

October 6th.—This morning I rose determined to sound Dr. Durham with reference to Mr. Lynne.

If I had not opened my lips to someone on the subject, I should soon have worried myself ill.

We were in the library together, the Doctor and I, having just come down from my brother's room—with Raoul's strikingly handsome picture looking down upon us from the lofty mantel-shelf.

"I wonder whether you have ever remarked," I began, trying to make the observation in an ordinary, matter-of-fact way, yet glancing nervously as I spoke, upward at my brother's portrait, "what a curiously strong resemblance one can find between those painted features on the canvases there, and the—the living features of that young man friend of yours—Mr. Lyulph Lynne?"

"Somehow to me, Dr. Durham, do you know, they appear strangely, almost faultlessly alike—especially the hair, the forehead, and the eyes!"

Dr. Durham, apparently, was not in the least surprised—not in the least taken aback.

On the contrary he smiled—yes, actually smiled!

CHAPTER XVI.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF LADY ANNE GUEST.

Yes—there stood Dr. Durham smiling enigmatically. What could it mean!

"Lady Anne," said he, at last, "you are right. There is a very remarkable likeness indeed. I have noticed it, of course, before to-day; in fact I made the discovery immediately after Mr. Lynne's appearance in Foxdale."

Then we looked at each other inquiringly, searchingly; each of us endeavouring, I believe, to read the face and thoughts of the other.

"It is extremely odd, Dr. Durham," I said, musingly; "at any rate, it strikes me as being so."

"Singular, indeed, truly," he returned, with that pleasant, genial smile of his, which is somehow so like his daughter Margery's.

"Do you know, I have really more than half a mind to mention it to Raoul himself," I said tentatively—feeling my way, as it were. "To speak the truth, it—it has worried me somewhat lately; though possibly that was very foolish."

"Mention it to the Earl!" Dr. Durham replied, lifting his eyebrows, "why not, Lady Anne? By all means tell Lord Beaumanoir

about it, if you have not already done so. It may interest him, you know."

"You see," I went on fearfully, yet secretly much relieved at this direct permission, "I have felt so troubled and uncertain, so unsettled about—about many things, I have not known in reality what to do. I—I have fancied that Raoul perhaps, might not care to hear about the matter in question—that possibly he might be exceedingly annoyed with me for approaching him on the subject at all. You know what he is now, so often weak and irritable in his suffering. Do you think, Dr. Durham, that he would be very vexed?"

"Try him, Lady Anne, try him," was the cheery, reassuring answer I received.

"But—but do you think that he is really well and strong enough, just yet?" I inquired, anxiously.

"Well, not to-day, perhaps, Lady Anne. You must watch your opportunity, you know. Some evening, after dinner, I should say, if he is in a likely mood, you might inveigle him into a little chat—just a little chat about old times, you know."

I sighed, in much doubt and perplexity. What a couple of conspirators they were!

"It is certainly very, very odd, Dr. Durham," I said again, wistfully.

He laughed as he answered me.

"Take heart—have courage, Lady Anne," he said, significantly. "Very curious things happen in this world, now and again, when their coming about is least expected. Don't forget that. Things which we never dreamed of come to pass occasionally; and every cloud, recollect too, however sombre and threatening, has the silver lining somewhere behind it."

Oh, what I wonder, does Dr. Durham suspect—perhaps know?

Has he in his possession a clue where I have none?

Or can it be possible that our two separate minds have grasped, as it were, the same idea?

Very busy has my brain been of late—busy in saddest retrospection.

I am lost on a troubled sea, as it were, of wildest conjecture and doubt.

Dead memories, things long since forgotten, rise out of their graves in the dim past, and, once more coming back to me in all their "climbing sorrow," fill my soul now with restless uncertainty and longing.

And dead voices sound again, too, in my ears, disturbing my resignation in the present, yet breathing of hope in the future.

Ghostly shadows flit before my eyes, and haunt my footsteps in the quiet house; and at night when I lie down my brain is busy still, so that I can neither rest nor close my eyelids even, for thinking—thinking always—of the past and its

No, no! I will not let my imagination run riot in this weak and uncured fashion, when merely a great and overwhelming disappointment may, perhaps, be looming ahead.

Anyway, I will act upon the suggestion of Dr. Durham, and watch my opportunity with my brother Raoul.

SUNDAY, October 12.—I have spoken to Raoul! Yes, at last I have broached to him the subject of this young Mr. Lynne!

Extraordinary, indeed, has been the result of it all—it has far surpassed my most sanguine expectations.

Let me write it all down here in the pages of this fragmentary journal of mine, this bulky crimson-bound volume with its silver lock and clasps, as clearly, coherently, and dispassionately as my excitement will allow; so that in the distant years I may, perchance, turn back to the date of this happy and eventful Sabbath evening, and, in the narrative thereof—if God spare me—live the past hour or two over again!

Raoul and I were alone together in the library. Happily it had been one of his rare "good" days, a day, that is, almost entirely free from pain, and he was able to go to church with me this morning.

In the afternoon he seemed quite "blithe" for him, and this evening I so contrived that we should sit together in the library.

A bright wood fire crackled on the andirons; the wind swept mournfully past the shuttered windows.

The house within was very still; most of the men and maids were gone to evening service.

I had been reading aloud to Raoul the fifty-first Psalm, and he had listened to me attentively throughout; at all events, he did not interrupt me, as he would sometimes do, declaring pettishly that he would rather read to himself.

His long invalid chair was on one side of the hearth; I sat facing him on the other.

The pictured face, with the beautiful brow and eyes, the other and younger Earl of Beaumanoir, was gazing down upon us, half-smiling, half-serious—as it seemed to me—from its lofty position on the paneling above the great oak mantelshelf.

"*Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness: that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*"

My voice faltered as I read out those comforting words—they seemed, indeed, to contain for us such infinite promise just then.

Raoul, his worn eyes fixed upon the fire, was smiling to himself sorrowfully—nay, a little bitterly, perhaps; but it was not the smile of the answerer or the sceptic, I thank God!

Had he heard the verse, and was he pondering it, I wondered, or was he thinking of something else?

Presently I closed the book; and then utter silence reigned.

"Raoul," I began timidly at length, bending forward and holding out my trembling hands to the blaze. "Dear Raoul, are you in the humour to talk a while with me?"

"About what, Anne?" he said, coming out of his reverie and looking up. "Is it about that of which we spoke one night a week or so ago? Have you yet arrived, then, at any decision, my poor, pale, sorrowful-looking old Anne?"

"No, no; it is not that exactly," I interrupted, hurriedly. "Raoul, I wait you, if—if you feel well enough, my dear brother, to go back with me as it were into the shadowland of the past, and to revive some of the memories that have been so long buried in it. I—I want to talk to you, Raoul," I cried, desperately, "of—of Griselda Lynne—of Griselda, Countess of Beaumanoir, as she rightly, lawfully was, you know, and as all the world suspected at the time."

My poor brother started, shivered, and looked away into the fire again.

"Is this a topic that I care to discuss, think you, Anne," he said, faintly, "even with you? Let her rest poor soul, in her grave, where she has lain undisturbed for so many years now; her grave at the bottom of the sea. Besides, what do you know of Griselda Lynne?"

"I do not believe that she was drowned," I answered, passionately. "On the contrary, I—I believe now that in reality she was saved—saved somehow, Raoul, by a miracle—and that a child of hers lived to—"

"Anne, you are crazy this evening!" he stopped me, in accents of unutterable pain.

He trembled visibly; his pale, thin face betrayed extreme agitation. He was shrinking back in his long low chair as if cowering from an expected blow.

In my eagerness, anxiety, and goading impatience, I failed to remember that undue excitement—against which Dr. Durham has so often warned us in Raoul's case—might bring about grievous harm for him.

My tongue once loosened, and my courage gained, I became incautious; though fortunately, as it has proved, my indiscretion wrought no very serious mischief.

I have never reproached Raoul for his follies and transgressions, and I never will; neither have I ever murmured at his reserve, in many ways, towards me.

It has not been from his own lips, naturally, that I have heard the stories of his past wild life.

Aught that I know—and of course, after all, it is not much—has reached me through the pitiless voice of the world.

Some five-and-twenty years ago the world's

tongue was wagging far from kindly, indeed maliciously, of the beautiful Griselda Lynne, an accomplished but a friendless young English maiden, who was then singing as a *prima donna* at the opera under a grand Italian name, and darkly coupling her fair renown with the tarnished reputation of the wild Earl of Beaumanoir.

All London knew or suspected something, in those days, of the sad history of the singer—how the handsome young West-country nobleman, who was as wealthy then as he was handsome, wooed, wedded, and alas! soon wearied of Griselda Lynne, and, worse still, afterwards deserted her heartlessly some time before the birth of her child; though at the moment, to do him bare justice, he suspected nothing concerning that child yet to be born into the world; otherwise, I am convinced, even he could never have acted so basely and so cruelly towards the woman he had wronged already.

Alas, alas! that I should find myself recording these damaging words against my own beloved brother; but kind old Time, I am thankful to say, has long since taken away the first poignant sting of the once bitter shame and disgrace, so that I weep but rarely now over the memory of those pitiful times.

And yet how vividly can I recall it all! Indeed, it seems but yesterday that fresh heart-breaking rumours were travelling down constantly to Foxdale Castle, and that I, the lonely watcher here, was mourning my brother's fall, powerless to turn or reclaim him from the vicious paths he loved!

I rose from my own seat, and sank on my knees by his.

One arm I placed lovingly under his wasted arm; the other I lifted high and pointed to the picture above the mantelpiece.

"No, Raoul," I said, breathlessly, "I am not crazed—only a great hope has taken firm possession of me; and—and my excitement is rendering me a little incoherent perhaps."

And then I broke to him as calmly, as gently as I could my suspicions of the stranger lad at Dr. Durham's house; the new young assistant there whom he had heard us speak of sometimes; whose beauty of feature and grace of form were even as his—Raoul's—own face and form had once been, and whose name moreover was said to be Lyulph Lynne; adding that I did not think it was difficult to guess the reason of his presence in Foxdale.

"Do you not recollect, Raoul," I went on earnestly, "that there was a report current, at the time of the wreck of the *Calcutta*, which said that everyone on board was not lost, notwithstanding all that the newspapers published to the contrary—that, although the name of Griselda Lynne was found amongst the list of those drowned, a whisper got abroad subsequently that it was all a mistake, and that she was in reality among the very few who were saved; only, having waited and waited in vain, as the years went by, for some tidings of her existence and whereabouts and none being forthcoming, you concluded at last that, after all, she must be dead with the rest of the victims of the ill-fated *Calcutta* and lying at the bottom of the sea."

"Raoul, I have reason—good reason, dear—to believe that that whisper was true nevertheless, that the tidings of her death were false."

"Her son is now living in Foxdale with Dr. Durham, or my name, dear Raoul, is not Anne Guest?"

I stopped; for my breath failed me.

My brother's head had drooped to his breast; every trace of startled surprise had died out of his wan face.

Rising hastily from my suppliant position, I got him a little brandy. I moistened his white lips with it; I smoothed back from his pallid brow the damp wayward locks of thin gray hair; and then I knelt by his side again and clasped my two arms around him.

"Oh! Anne, Anne!" he groaned, "what a failure has my life been! But you, my poor sanguine old woman, must be deceived in your wild surmises—womanlike, you have jumped too rashly at conclusions."

"It is all impossible, I say."

"Such great good luck and mercy are not for me. Heaven, remembering my misdeeds, would never grant me so infinite a blessing as a crown to my wasted life. No, no, Anne dear!" he cried, with a dry, hard sob, "the whole idea is a cruel delusion—your loving imagination has misled you utterly. It never—never could be true!"

"*Thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow,*" I whispered. "Think of it, Raoul, as a glorious message direct from a merciful God. No one, dear brother, is so utterly lost, but that He, in His own good time, can bring the wanderer safely back into the right road again."

"He punishes, Raoul, but, dear, He forgives too. He takes away, but He can restore; and—God in the end shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Nothing is impossible to One whose mercy is so complete!"

Thus earnestly and hopefully we talked long together, until the night was far advanced; and when I parted from Raoul, leaving him prostrated but still hopeful, it was with the understanding that I should write a letter to Mr. Lyne on the morrow, requesting him to come up to us for an interview at the Castle.

Raoul himself has consented to see the young man—that is, of course, if the stranger will accord us a meeting here—nay, is most impatient and eager now to see and to make the acquaintance of this young Lyolph Lyne.

Will the meeting between them be one of peace? I trust—oh, I pray with my whole soul that it may never be otherwise!

Sitting here alone, in the silence of my own chamber, the candles burning low and flickering weirdly now and then, my heart is filled to overflowing with a great thankfulness, a sense of gratitude that can find no expression in words.

And in my breast there is a feeling akin to pain itself, albeit it is purest joy, which dims my eyes and renders my hand unsteady. . . . so that I can write no more to-night.

My trust is in the Lord—we are in His hands. October 13th—Raoul, as I feared he might be, is too weak and ill to-day to see anyone.

Although his weakness is pitiable to look upon, and he cannot move a step without the aid of Ashley's arm, my brother's spirits are marvellously good.

What a wonderful tonic is Hope! I have not yet written to Mr. Lyne; nor must I do so, I suppose, until Raoul is better.

Dr. Durham called early this morning; so I took the initiative and told him everything—gave him an account of all that happened in the library last night, keeping back nothing whatever. He is an old, a tried, and very dear friend of the family; he is to be trusted, I know full well.

I mentioned, too, of course, that it was my intention to write to the young man.

The doctor, however, was not to be entrapped into a single word of confession.

Therefore, with regard to the actual extent of his knowledge, I am just as much in a mist as ever!

Immeasurably astonished he certainly appeared to be; but that the astonishment was purely feigned one could not fail to discern.

It was hard indeed to forbear a smile at such open and glaring dissimulation!

(To be continued.)

The time was when Florida was an immense sand-bar stretching into the Gulf of Mexico, probably as barren as can be conceived. But in the semi-tropical climate under which it exists in the course of ages the seeds carried to its shores by the sea, and the winds, and the myriads of birds which find it a resting-place, have clothed it with luxuriant vegetation, interspersed with tracks of apparently barren sand. It is a land of peculiar scenery, which the pencil of the artist has heretofore scarcely touched. Its main features illustrate the absurdity of the common notion that the landscapes of tropical and semi-tropical latitudes are superior in luxuriance of vegetable production to those of the temperate zones. The truth is, that in the hot regions it is only when there is constant moisture that there is a strong and rank growth of plants.

HELEN'S DILEMMA.

—20:—

CHAPTER I.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

It is four o'clock in the afternoon on board the P. and O. a.s. *Carnatic*. Under the awning on deck more than a hundred passengers are sitting, standing, lounging, and walking, having come up to look for a little breeze to stimulate their appetites for dinner; for are they not under a tropical heat, and in the Red Sea?

The Red Sea is at present as smooth as glass, as the ship goes throbbing through the water. Overhead the sky is blue and cloudless.

The African and Arabian coasts (dimly visible on either side) are of another and fainter shade of blue; but neither those far mountains nor the sky itself out-ribs the blue eyes of a girl who is down below stairs, sharing a tiny cabin with another fellow-passenger.

The two Misses Brown are no relation to each other. They came on board at Galle—one from the Australian mail steamer and one from the Madras coaster.

Attracted by their identity of name, and from the fact of each being alone, and both being in mourning, they elected to share the same cabin for the remainder of the journey, and are already fast friends.

Let me take you below and introduce you to them without further delay.

They have found the heat intense. The port-hole yawns as wide as it can—which is not saying much—and one of the young ladies is lying prone in her berth, evidently in the last stage of exhaustion.

She is a pale, refined, delicate-looking girl of about two-and-twenty. She looks as if life had so far been somewhat of a battle, for there are lines of premature care ruled into her forehead, and about the corners of her mouth.

Her hair is loosely pushed back from her aching temples, and her eyes are riveted on her companion, who is standing in the middle of the little cabin with her dress off, her magnificent hair hanging loose and entirely cloaking her down to her knees, and slowly fanning herself with an enormous black fan embellished with a sun-flower.

This is Miss Brown of the blue eyes—Miss Brown the rich orphan—the Australian heiress—the beautiful Miss Brown!

"Did you ever in your life feel anything so baking hot as this afternoon has been? Puff! I wish I might run up on deck like this and get a breath of air," tossing back her heavy locks, and displaying her bare arms.

"My dear girl," replied a languid voice from the berth. "You would not call *this* anything if you had been in India."

"Well, at any rate, you are knocked up—Anglo-Indian though you are!" returned she of the fan, triumphantly.

"Ah, but I'm always being knocked up. I'm a wretched specimen of humanity, no more fitted to go out in the world and earn my bread than—than—" pausing for a simile.

"Than the captain's canary," returned her friend, with a smile. "Poor Rachel! you ought to have been rich, according to the fitness of things. You are far from strong—very shy, very quiet, very clever! You would do beautifully for the rich Miss Brown—and I for the poor one!"

"I don't think you and poverty would agree at all," replied the young lady in the berth, with an air of calm conviction.

"Yes, we should!" retorted the other, emphatically; "far better than you imagine. I am self-reliant, energetic, firm of purpose—unaccustomed to luxuries; for in Tasmania poor papa and I lived very, very quietly; and I have robust health. Yes, I am far fitter to go out into the world and find for myself than you are, my poor dear Rachel!"

"I heartily wish we could change places, then!" said Rachel, with a smile. "I am quite willing to be the rich Miss Brown if you will

endow me with all your goods and chattels and the balance at your bankers!"

"You are taken for the heiress, too!" said the other, with a nod. "I think nearly everyone on board imagines that you came from Tasmania, and I from Madras!"

"My dear Helen! how can you be so ridiculous!"

"I am not joking; and their mistake is quite natural. You are quiet, retiring, reserved," replied Helen, tossing back her hair, and commencing to pace the cabin. "All that looks like money. You dress better than I do; you wear a diamond ring!" declaiming with the fan. "Whilst I am much more approachable; my wardrobe is sweet simplicity itself, and I am convivial, sociable, and easily amused; so the result is that you, because you hardly open your lips, are treated with deference and respect, and I am patronised and kept in my place."

"Yet you have five thousand a year—and I am going home to earn my bread as a governess!" replied the girl in the berth, somewhat bitterly. "You see," she proceeded slowly, "people do not grasp the idea that an heiress has a right to be lovely as Hebe herself. It is not according to the fitness of things fortune should shower all her favours on me. They imagine that I am the heiress because I am plain; and you are a pauper because of your pretty face and great good nature. And you make yourself so cheap, running messages and amusing other people's children!" concluded Miss Rachel Brown, disapprovingly, closing her eyes.

"You don't care about the rising generation, do you?" said Helen, commencing to plait her long locks of ruddy, golden-tinted hair. "Poor soul! I pity you! for yours will be an uncongenial task. Now, I like the little imps!"

"Thank Heaven, there's only one young olive branch for me to look after, in my future situation!" said Rachel, crossing her arms behind her head, and surveying her friend's toilet with languid interest. "I little dreamt that I should ever come down to going out as a governess—but necessity knows no law!"

"I wonder you never married! I thought all girls in India went off, as they call it, as a matter of course," observed the young lady at the glass now busily winding the massive plait into a knob at the back of her head, and searching vainly for hairpins.

"Married!" echoed the other, with a gasp, and colouring to the brow. "What an absurd idea! Not one out of ten girls in India marry now—the market is overstocked. I went to my brother—my married brother—as I think I told you. I spent five years in the gorgeous East, and here I am going back to Europe like the traditional bad penny."

"And your brother?" said Helen, who had been surveying the back of her head with a hand-glass, and had paused in her inspection.

"My brother is dead! I am alone in the world!" returned the elder Miss Brown, in a low voice.

"Never alone in the world as long as I am in it!" said her companion, kneeling down beside her, and putting a slender arm round her neck. "You know you are my friend; and my friends are so few that I cannot afford to lose sight of them. There! there's the first dinner-bell! Get up, Rachel, darling! at once, and I will do your hair. Hurry, or you will be late!"

CHAPTER II.

"Do you know whom I heard you compared to to-day, Helen?" said her friend, taking a seat beside her on the moonlit deck.

"Have not the faintest idea! The Queen of Sheba—Mrs. Langtry?"

"No, but Clytie—the goddess Clytie. And your profile and the shape of your head do resemble her strongly—the familiar statue, I mean."

"What a compliment! Should you advise me to go in for a classic style of dress?"

"The aesthetic would suit you—a robe of samite, a girdle, and a lily; and, by the way, I

do believe, quite seriously, that I am supposed to be the rich Miss Brown. The captain was joking at dinner, and said something about a person with thousands like me! Poor man! If he only knew! This day month my duties will have commenced—I shall be Mrs. Despard's governess."

"Mrs. Despard! how funny! That is the name of my aunt—and not a very common one. Where does your Mrs. Despard live?"

"Near Thornhurst, in Kent. She is a friend of a lady I knew in India, who got me the situation and gave me a splendid character. It seems odd for anyone to take a governess from India, but I am well recommended. I have seen the world, I am accomplished, and I am cheap!"

"Do you know that Mrs. Despard is my aunt? There cannot be two ladies of that name at Thornhurst, can there? So we are actually going to the same house! Well, the world is a small place after all!" said Helen, opening her eyes very wide, and gazing at her companion with all her might.

"The aunt you spoke of—your father's only sister, who wrote you such delightful letters, and seems so nice!" replied Miss Brown, in a key of the highest amazement. "Impossible!"

"But it is a fact! Our Mrs. Despards are one and the same. Come and I will prove it to you—come down and we'll compare our letters," rising, and hurrying to the top of the companion ladder, and jumping downstairs.

"Here is mine—my last," she said, laying a sheet of foreign paper in the hands of her more deliberate companion, who had followed her into the cabin and shut the door. "Read it and judge for yourself!"

"MY DARLING NIECE,—

"By the time this reaches you you will be on the point of sailing, and I send you one line to tell you that we are actually counting the days till you arrive. Your room is ready; your cousins have been very busy doing it up with blue and white draperies, and making quite a pretty bower for your reception.

"Your uncle is looking out for a saddle-horse to suit you; and I have heard of an excellent maid, so I think that everything will be in readiness for you when you come among us. You must make up your mind not to think of us as strangers, but as your nearest of kin.

"We are all looking forward to giving you a hearty welcome and adopting you as one of the family. My Blanche is just your age—twenty last June; I am sure you and she will be like sisters.

"Ever your affectionate aunt,

"ISABELLA DESPARD."

"P.S.—Your uncle will meet you at Southampton."

"A very charming letter—very much so, indeed," said Rachel, folding it up slowly and putting it into its envelope. "Now you shall see mine, received just as I was leaving Madras; you see the handwriting is identical."

"DEAR MADAM,—

"Mrs. Phillips tells me that you are leaving India immediately, and that I may expect you about the first of December. I hope she has thoroughly explained my wishes to you, and that you quite understand your duties. You will have the entire care of a little girl of twelve and her wardrobe. Music, French, English, drawing are, I believe, your acquirements. I shall expect you to read French with my eldest daughter, accompany her in singing, and be as much as possible of a companion to my daughter, who is a confirmed invalid. You will breakfast and dine in the school-room, and take lunch with us—unless we have visitors in the house. All these little things are so much better understood when plainly put down in black and white. You pay for your own washing and travelling expenses—salary twenty-five pounds a year. As you are not certificated, I am sorry I cannot possibly offer you more. I trust that I shall find you are all Mrs. Phillips states.—I remain, yours faithfully,

"ISABELLA DESPARD."

"What a horrid, cold, formal letter!—not the least like mine," said Helen, sitting down on her berth, and embracing her knees with both arms.

"You must remember that you are her rich niece—I am her cheap governess, dear; there is a difference!" said Rachel sarcastically.

"Did Mrs. Phillips tell you anything about my aunt!—what kind of a person she really was?" asked Helen, with a thoughtful face.

"Yes; she told me a great deal about her."

"Which you will at once repeat to me," said Helen eagerly.

"I shall do nothing of the sort!" replied her friend, firmly. "She will be very nice to you, I am sure, and that is all you need care about."

To this Helen made no reply, but sat for some moments, still nursing her knees, in wrapt contemplation of the carpet.

"I have it!" she cried, at length. "I have a splendid idea!" jumping up and confronting her companion with a face of radiant elation.

"Listen to me, Rachel," putting her arm round her waist. "I have the most abject horror of being liked for my money alone, and not for myself. I would give anything for the luxury of feeling that people cared for me for myself—not my fortune. Suppose I go among my relations as the governess—and you as the niece!"

"Helen, you are stark, staring mad!" ejaculated her friend, with an expression of blank amazement.

"No, no! I have method in my madness. I shall see what sort of people my relations really are. I can act the governess. I can play and draw, and read French, although I was educated under the Southern cross. I am also Miss Brown—the thing seems beautifully simple!"

"It would be a very unfair deception; your relations would never forgive you—and I for one will have nothing to say to it," said Rachel, quickly.

"Yes, you will!" replied Helen, confidently. "Wait and hear all the pros and cons, before you make up your mind. In the first place,—reckoning on her fingers, and speaking with great animation—"I shall have the opportunity of making friends on my own merits. Secondly, you will have a comfortable and luxurious home, as long as you are in my shoes. You want a rest, you say! You are not strong; and complete idleness and freedom from care and bother will do you no end of good—you can't deny that."

"You think I shall be entirely free from care whilst I am acting the part you allot me? On the contrary," said Rachel in a mocking voice, "I should have a veritable sword of Damocles hanging over my head. I should be always expecting to be found out! I know none of your connections—nothing about familiar family names!"

"Neither do I!" interrupted her friend triumphantly. "I went out to Tasmania as a child. I am as ignorant of our belongings as you are. Aunt Despard had not written to father for years. She had not the smallest idea that he was a rich man until lately. He told me that he had always been looked upon as the ne'er-do-well of the family, as he made an imprudent marriage and sold out of the army, and all his people washed their hands of him. He made a grand speculation in buying up land in the neighbourhood of Melbourne, which filled his pockets with gold. And that is his history. Poor dear father," she added, with tears in her eyes, "he often regretted that he had not gone home and made friends with his sister on my account. He could not bear the idea of leaving me almost alone in the world," she concluded, with quivering lips.

"No one with five thousand a-year need ever be alone!" remarked her companion, emphatically. "No, no, you are not to be pitied. You have youth, and health, and beauty, and money. What more would you have? Look at me! I am penniless, friendless, and in wretched health. The doctors say that I have disease of the heart, and may die any day. The sooner the better!" she added, in a hard, unnatural voice.

"Oh, Rachel! how can you say anything so wicked!" exclaimed Helen, aghast.

"My dear, if you had been knocked about as I

have by the storms of fate, if you had led a life as miserable as mine, all you would ask would be a painless, quiet death. Life has nothing left to offer me."

"You will think differently some day, Rachel. You are in low spirits; your health affects your mind. The blackest cloud has a silver lining—when things come to the worst they mend."

"My affairs are past mending," returned Rachel, gloomily. "Some day you shall hear the story of my life, Helen, and you shall judge for yourself."

"Tell me now, darling. I know you have some heavy trouble on your mind. Do tell me!" urged Helen, pleadingly.

"Not now, another time," shaking her head inflexibly.

"Well, then, about my plan, will you agree to it? It can do no harm to you. You are obliging me; and I take the whole responsibility upon myself!" spreading out two pretty little white hands.

"And how long do you purpose playing your part, Helen?"

"A month—a whole month! That will give me ample time to ingratiate myself with aunt, uncle, and cousins."

"You silly, silly girl! And at the end of that time may I ask what is to become of me—of the impostor? I shall be turned out on the doorstep, bag and baggage, without wages or character, and my last state will be worse than my first!"

"Your last state will be better than your first. For if they don't take our little 'surprise' in good part, and are not nice people, we will leave together; and you shall be my governess, and have the sole charge of me. So now agree. Do say yes—do, darling!" putting her arm round her friend's neck, and giving her half-a-dozen coaxing kisses.

"I don't believe we could act our parts for a single day!" said Rachel, relenting. "You are not qualified to teach, I am certain."

"Yes, I am, you rude girl! I can sing, and play, and draw. I had the very best masters from Hobart Town. My French only wants rubbing up. I was born at Boulogne. It is my mother-tongue."

"Well, I shouldn't have thought that teaching was at all in your line!" said Rachel, disbelievingly.

"You will see! Yes; you will see! Remember that I am now the governess in embryo, and you are a young lady from Tasmania. Promise me not to undecieve our fellow-passengers—"

"I don't mind them; there is no harm in a little joke as far as they are concerned; but the other scheme is different."

"Tea! young ladies; tea!" said a merry voice outside the door, and a golden fringe and pair of bright eyes were introduced round the door curtain.

"Remember, it is settled!" said Helen, pressing her friend's hand. "I am now going to talk about children, and lessons, and India; I am going to practise my part at once. In the future," pausing with her hand on the door-handle, and looking back at her companion with a smile, "I am the poor Miss Brown!"

CHAPTER III.

HELEN played her cards so well, and entered into the spirit of her part with such ability and zeal, that her friend was borne away upon the tide of her impetuosity, and obliged to pose in an unresisting, negative way, as the Tasmanian heiress!

"You are carrying the joke too far, Helen," she remonstrated. "I heard you telling half-a-dozen people that you were going to teach a little girl of ten, and asking Mrs. Howard if you could dress on twenty-five pounds a-year!"

"She thinks it miserable pay; and so it is! She says she pays her maid forty," said Helen, ignoring her friend's rebuke.

"Well, all I can say is, that you will be sorry for your folly some day, Helen. Once you begin

to play with circumstances you never know where you may end."

"Oh! what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive!" she quoted, gravely. "It is no use now for me to declare that I am sailing under false colours. I accept the situation for your sake; I accept attentions not intended for me; I even talk of Melbourne and Tasmania! I hate myself bitterly all the time! But once we land at Southampton, I warn you that I shall cast off these peacock's feathers and be my own homely self—the jacked-up, once more!"

The *Carnatic* made her way through the Canal and out into the Mediterranean, which greatly belied its name!

Instead of being blue, it was of a dirty grey; instead of being smooth, it was exceedingly rough—a horrid, chopping sea. Then the wind got up in great force; and under the lee of Cyprus they came in for a stiff gale—a gale that raged, and roared, and blew all day with tremendous violence.

Rachel, prostrate and terrified, lay in her berth, which she had never left since they passed Port Said. She was weak, faint, and refused all food.

Helen tended her with affectionate solicitude, making wonderful struggles to stand and to walk, notwithstanding the violent lurching of the ship and the semi-darkness of the cabin—for the head lights were on, the ports were closed.

Night came on apace. There was a bad sunset. The glass fell still more. The sea became terrific, with thunder, lightning, and torrents of rain; the roaring of the wind, the rattling of the thunder, the frightful rolling of the ship, accompanied by continuous smashes in the saloon and pantries; the boxes, chairs, and even wash-stands, broke from their fixings and dashed about the cabin.

The scene was appalling; the sensation of lurching over, and going down! down! down!—till one never expected to right again—was sickening in the extreme.

Helen knelt by her friend's berth, with one hand in hers, the other holding on convulsively to a brass rail, now and then uttering some soothing little speech, or bathing the invalid's head with a handkerchief soaked in eau-de-Cologne. The sole light in the cabin was from a candle in a swinging socket, which swung to and fro in a manner fearful to witness.

The deafening noise overhead made conversation impossible, even had Rachel been able to reply to her companion's consolations and words of encouragement. Rachel lay back in her berth, her eyes closed, her lips ashy pale. She breathed in long-drawn gasps, and held Helen's hand as in a vice of iron.

Time went by, still the storm raged. Still Helen knelt on the floor, cold and stiff. The candle had gone out. They were in complete darkness. She laid her head on the edge of the berth and, overcome by fatigue, dozed off into a troubled sleep. She was awakened by a feeble tugging at her sleeve, and roused instantly to her usual alertness.

"Are you there, Helen?" said a voice, so weak that she had to bend her ear close to the speaker's lips.

"You have been very, very kind to me, dear Helen! Heaven bless you always and keep you! Do not deceive your friends!"—a long pause—"I want you to promise me one thing"—bringing out the words with difficulty. "Take care of her. Do not let him find her. Promise me—swear to me!"

"I promise you everything, Rachel, if you will only keep perfectly quiet, and try to go to sleep. The wind is really going down. We are not rolling nearly as much as we were," said Helen, soothingly, impressed with the idea that her patient was rambling in her mind.

Again a long silence, broken only by the sound of seas breaking violently on the deck overhead, and the creaking and straining of the ship.

When Helen next awoke daylight, cold and grey, was stealing into the cabin, and revealed everything in the most fearful confusion. The floor strewn with dresses, boxes, books, pillows.

She turned her eyes on her companion, who had still retained her hand in a grasp of ice. Her eyes were wide open, fixed and glassy. Her features were rigid—she was dead!

CHAPTER IV.

THE following afternoon the wind had somewhat abated. The sea had gone down, and the funeral took place.

The remains of Rachel Brown were enclosed in a coffin knocked together by the ship's carpenter. Very beautiful she looked in death, as she lay in her coffin with her hands crossed on her breast. Her face had a repose and tranquillity it had lacked in life. Many of the ladies on board visited the cabin of death, and not a few tears were dropped over that marble-like form.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the engines stopped. A bell tolled. Many of the crew and passengers assembled in the gangway whilst the captain read the service for the burial of the dead over the coffin which lay at his feet covered by the Union Jack.

At the words, "We therefore commit her body to the deep," the flag was cast aside, the grating lowered, and all that was mortal of Rachel Brown disappeared from human eye with one sullen splash.

Helen felt the shockingly sudden death of her friend most acutely. She was quite prostrated for several days, and did not appear among her fellow passengers till they were steaming slowly out of Malta harbour.

She then came up shivering wrapped in a thick woollen shawl, and seated herself outside a circle of ladies, who gladly made room for her, and were all very anxious to hear her version of the late melancholy occurrence.

"How awful for you to be alone with her all night, and she quite dead! The doctors say she was dead at least three hours before you called them. Heart disease!—she always looked delicate. She could not possibly have lived six months!" said one lady, laying her crochet down and addressing herself to Helen.

"I wonder who will get all her money?" said another, with an air of interested speculation.

"Her money!" echoed Helen, in a low voice.

"Why, did you not know that she had thousands a year! She was a Tasmanian heiress—probably her father was a convict!" remarked a faded-looking little woman with sandy hair.

"The captain wrote home to her people and posted the letter to-day," said the first speaker; "and he has put seals on all her things."

Helen's heart gave a sudden jump as she began to realise the truth.

She was now to all intents and purposes "the poor Miss Brown,"—the heiress was dead!

What would it avail her to declare that the whole affair had been a little friendly plot—a mere joke to while away the monotonous days on board ship. Who would believe her!

She hastened down to her former cabin. All Rachel's things were in their places, intact and untouched; but all *hers* had been removed. Her overland portmanteau, containing letters of credit, a copy of her father's will, photographs, letters, jewellery, and every means of identification was gone.

Fortunately she still possessed a travelling bag containing a considerable sum of money and a box of under-linen, which had accompanied her to her new cabin.

But what was she to do. To tell the Captain! How could she prove her words! She sat down on her empty berth and thought over the whole matter with might and main.

If she were to go to him and say,—

"I am the heiress. I have been deceiving you all along. It was only a joke," he would naturally say,—

"No, no, young lady—you want to step into the dead girl's shoes—you want to be the rich Miss Brown; but you have mistaken your man. I am not a fool! You told me yourself that you were going out as a governess, and you must stick to your former character."

Her ticket from Melbourne—if she even had

that! But all her belongings were naturally in her own boxes—and they were sealed.

There was nothing for it but patience; and, if the worst came to the worst, she could only accept the fate she was once so eager to secure, and take up the situation of her aunt's governess.

"You here, Miss Brown," said the portly stewardess, walking into the cabin. "Ah! it was a terrible shock to you, and you will miss her sorely. She was a nice, quiet young lady, and never gave an atom of trouble, poor dear! She made a lovely corpse! And she had her sorrows, sure enough. I don't think she was a miss at all," she added mysteriously.

"What do you mean?" asked Helen, indignantly.

"I just mean this," said the stewardess, diving into her pocket, and fishing out a fat purse, with a brass scrap. "See here," dangling a thin gold chain before Helen's eyes. "Do you see this"—holding out some object between her fat finger and thumb. "I found this chain round her neck with the wedding-ring fastened to it."

Helen took it in her hand, and turned it over with a face of blank amazement.

There was no doubt about it; it was a wedding ring.

CHAPTER V.

HELEN found no one to meet her when she landed at Southampton, and made her way alone up to London one miserably cold morning early in December.

She went to a quiet family hotel recommended to her by a fellow passenger, and, having selected a bedroom, and seen her two modest boxes safely installed, ordered herself that favourite beverage with all the sex—to wit, a cup of tea.

As she sipped and sipped she tried to devise some fixed plan of action, and, after due consideration, she came to the conclusion that on the morrow she would sally forth and buy some clothes—for her heart recoiled from the dead girl's dresses; then, that she would call on her late father's solicitors, state the true facts of the case, and leave it to them to get her out of her difficulty as best they might.

Next morning, after an early breakfast, she started in a hansom for Oxford and Regent-streets, and made purchases on a very large scale—a scale quite befitting the Tasmanian heiress. She invested in a superb sealskin palatoo, price forty guineas, for she felt the cold most acutely; a tailor-made dress, a black satin costume (a French pattern) a hat, bonnet, muff, umbrella, and a good assortment of dainty boots and gloves—in short, she made an immense hole in her little capital of a hundred and twenty pounds.

Very much delighted with her morning's work, she drove to the office of her solicitors, Messrs. Sharp and Smart, and asked to see the principal of the firm.

She was shown into his presence by a very kindly boy, with his pen behind his ear, and a broad grin on his countenance, and found an ill-tempered, not to say wicked-looking, little old man seated at a large, high desk, writing letters on very blue paper.

His appearance and his greeting chilled her to the very marrow of her bones. Here would be no kind sympathiser with her folly, but a stern and merciless judge.

Briefly and tremblingly she stated her case, without one remark being made by Mr. Sharp, and when she had finished an ominous silence ensued, lasting for quite three minutes.

"A very pretty story, indeed!" said a harsh voice, suddenly. "It does your imagination the highest credit—but it won't go down here. Your fellow-passenger, the wealthy Miss Brown, is dead—and you, the other Miss Brown see no reason why you should not step into her shoes. I must say you have an uncommon amount of assurance—to say the least of it!"

"But, indeed, I really and truly am Helen Brown!" faltered his miserable client, almost in tears.

"Prove it!" he replied slowly; "prove it, prove it!"

"I can't!" she stammered. "All my boxes are in the captain's care, and sealed up as her property."

"Quite so, considering that they were her property! If they were yours why did you not remonstrate? Why did you allow your goods to be appropriated? You must be insane to come to me with such a cock-and-a-bull story, my good girl! Come, I have no leisure for listening to romances, and I never had a taste that way at any time!"

"But people in Tasmania can swear to me! I am well known out there!" urged Helen, pertinaciously.

"Well, bring home your witnesses, and we will see about it!" said Mr. Sharp, with an unpleasant smile, dipping his pen once more in the ink and preparing to resume his labours.

"I have no money—how can I bring them home?" said Helen, in despair. "Oh, what am I to do!" she added, half to herself, as she clasped her hands together.

"Go and take up your situation, and forget all about this preposterous idea of yours! That's my advice to you—gratis!" said Mr. Sharp, dismissing her with a wave of his hand.

There was nothing for it but to go, and Helen withdrew from the office in a kind of stupor, got into the hansom almost mechanically, and drove back to her hotel.

"What was she to do?" she kept asking herself as she paced her room restlessly from end to end. She had just eleven sovereigns left in her purse. She must pay her hotel bill—her railway fare, if she elected to go to Thornhurst. It seemed the only course open to her. She must accept the rôle of governess—at any rate for the present. It served her right, she could not help thinking, as she sat down and wrote a short note to her aunt announcing her arrival.

The story would be deemed incredible everywhere; she could not prove her identity for at least three months. Meanwhile she could not starve, so the letter was despatched to Thornhurst by the night mail, informing Mrs. Despard that her new governess awaited her pleasure at "Baker's Family Hotel, Jermyn-street, London."

In two days' time a very freezing missive came in reply. "Miss Brown was to lose no more time, but to start for her future home by that afternoon's train, and would be met at Thornhurst Station in due course."

Very speedily Helen made all her arrangements, packed away her new wardrobe, paid her bill, and took her departure. The day was bitterly cold as she glided out of Victoria Station, the solitary occupant of a first-class carriage.

Two hours' travelling brought her to the small station of Kingsford, in Kent—the nearest to her destination. The platform was empty, save for one solitary porter. She alighted and looked about in the vain expectation of seeing some one come to meet her, but there was not a single creature in sight, and presently the train moved on, leaving her and her luggage entirely alone.

She went into the waiting-room and warmed her frozen feet on the fender, and after some time a rough-looking countryman appeared in the doorway, whip in hand, and said,—

"Be you the young person for Thornhurst—Miss Brown?"

An eager nod was Helen's reply.

"Then come along; I have the tax cart here. The mistress bid me say she could not send the carriage. The horses have just been clipped, and she was afraid of them standing in the cold."

Five minutes later Helen and her boxes were hoisted into the tax-cart, and the shaggy, unkempt-looking animal between the shafts was bowling them along the road at a very liberal pace, his head being set towards home.

The driver, impressed by his companion's appearance, her low voice, and her magnificent fur coat, was now deferentially attentive, doing the honours of his trap to the best of his ability—giving his fair charge the whole rug to herself

and the best cushion, and pointing out as he went along all the places of note.

"That's Foxford, the place over there among the trees with the two towers. Miss Fox is the great heiress of these parts, has as good as the Bank of England at her back. Her father is a bill-broker."

"I'm afraid I don't know what that is," said Helen, simply.

"Well for you, that never heard of him!" returned her Jehu. "But you have come from foreign parts, I hear!" he added, looking at her compassionately. "You are Miss Loo-Loo's new governess, all the way from India?"

To this Helen made no reply, and he continued,—

"Lord help you! but you'll have a handful with her. She's nearly been the death of five already! She's the most incorrigible, mischievous, impudent—"

"Do you live at Thornhurst?" asked Helen, whose heart sank at this description of her young charge, but who wished to restrain her companion's confidences.

"I do; man and boy, a matter of forty year! I'm Tom Toke the bailiff!"—touching his hat with his forefinger. "The squire he farms a goodish bit himself, and keeps stall-feeders and young cattle, so our hands are generally pretty full. My father was bailiff at Cargew. I was born there. So we be always here in the family!" he added with some pride.

"And where is Cargew?" asked Helen, more from politeness than from any real desire for information.

"I'll show it to you when we come to the brow of this hill. It was the finest property within these counties till Sir Rupert's father made ducks and drakes of it. Ay, he were a wild 'un, he were!" he added, giving his horse a sharp cut.

"And who is Sir Rupert?" asked Helen, indifferently.

"He is the master's nephew—his only sister's son, Sir Rupert Lynn. He is mostly abroad, as he can't afford to keep up the place; and he won't hear of letting it, beyond the outlying farms and part of the demesne. The house and home part he keeps in his own hands. They say he had a big offer to let it on lease to some rich London shopkeeper, but he wouldn't hear of it. He's terribly proud! He said he'd sooner see the place in ashes! Heaven forgive him!" added Mr. Toke, piously.

"Well, I think he is right. Why should he let his family place for half his lifetime, and go wandering about the world?" said Helen, with decision.

"He wanders about enough as it is! He might just as well have no home, and he would have the satisfaction of the rent in his pocket, if he were not so fearfully proud. I beg pardon, miss! He comes home for a couple of months, and lives in a couple of rooms, rides over the estate, looks into his affairs, and is off again before you can say Jack Robinson! There it is!" he added, suddenly, pointing with his whip to the low lying country beneath them. "There you see the woods of Cargew, as far as your eye can reach; and there's the house, half-hidden behind that long belt of trees—that dark, red building with all the chimneys and the moat."

It was indeed a noble wide-spreading property. No wonder its owner preferred a corner under his own ancient roof than to filling his empty pockets by letting it to a wealthy tenant, thought Helen.

"It's a splendid place, isn't it, miss?" said Toke, with ill-disguised pride. "There's hardly another like it between this and London—such an old-fashioned house, they say, is a great curiosity now! And the timber is unparalleled!"—bringing out the long word with great triumph.

"But there's Sir Rupert's folly again. He won't let a stick be touched. If he was to marry an heiress now—that's the only thing I see for him! Saving as he is, he can make but little headway against the mortgages. Ay, the old gentleman was a fast goer, he was—race-horses, hounds, cards, and the deuce and all knows what besides! Here we are—this is our road," he said, whipping up his steed and whirling round a corner.

"We are modern, you see,"—pointing to a large white building, visible through the trees at one side of the lane—"but it's a pretty tidy place, and lots of good sound land," he added, complacently.

Helen gazed eagerly at her future home, which stood on a slight elevation, and was surrounded by terraces dotted with a considerable amount of white vases and statues. It was a large, uninteresting-looking mansion, with many regular rows of windows, and a heavy pillared porch.

They soon were winding up the neatly kept avenue, enclosed on either side by deep, well-shorn banks, and within five minutes had come to a halt in front of the hall door.

Mr. Toke descended heavily, and administered a hearty pull to the bell, which was presently responded to by a footman in a brown livery with a scarlet waistcoat, looking for all the world like a supercilious robin red-breast—in point of fact, he had been disturbed at his five-o'clock tea.

"Oh! so it's you, Mr. Toke," he said glaring at the bailiff, who was in the act of clapping his arms across his breast with great velocity, and stamping with his feet to restore them to animation. "I might have known it by the ring. So this is the young lady! If you'll get down, miss, your boxes will be seen to. Mrs. Despard is in the drawing-room. Who shall I say?" he asked, condescendingly.

"Say Miss Brown!" replied Helen, who, benumbed with cold, had descended with great difficulty, and was only half across the hall when he flung open a door, and announced her.

She was aware of a rustling, and a rising in the dim room, a little smothered laughter, and a manly voice saying,—

"Oh, no! I say! let's have her in here, and have a look at her first!"

"Hush—h—h!" said another; "she will hear you!" And, indeed, Helen was already on the threshold.

"How do you do?" asked a thin, frosty tone, and a tall, elderly lady rose to receive her. "You must have had a cold drive, I am afraid! My daughter, Miss Despard!" indicating a young lady, who was seated in a low chair near the fire, and who merely bowed her head in acknowledgment of the introduction. "My son, Mr. Augustus Despard!" continued the hostess, and a young man, who had hitherto been lounging on the sofa chewing a toothpick, now arose, came forward, and pressing Helen's hand very cordially, stared hard into her face, but it was far too dark to be able to tell one feature from another.

After a few languid inquiries about Helen's journey Mrs. Despard rang the bell, and shortly afterwards two footmen entered—one carrying lamps and the other the tea equipage.

A little folding table was wheeled before the mistress of the house, covered with a creel-worked tea-cloth, and a silver tray, laden with an exquisite tea-set of dark blue and white china, laid upon it.

Wafer-thin bread and butter and seed-cake were added to the repast, and the footmen silently withdrew.

Now that there was plenty of light Helen looked curiously round. The room they were in was large, lofty, and magnificently furnished according to the latest code.

The walls and carpets were palest grey; the chairs, mirrors, cabinets, and lounges were in black and gold; the draperies deep crimson velvet or silk. Water-coloured sketches and plaques of old china half covered and concealed the walls.

An open piano, scattered over with music, stood in one corner, a huge *jardinière* crammed with the rarest exotics in another. Various valuable *objets de art* were carelessly arranged on tables or in cabinets; and everywhere the eye ranged was evidence of taste, luxury, and money.

Helen glanced at her aunt, who was pouring out tea. She was a handsome elderly woman, with severe dark eyes, a well-cut nose, and an exceedingly firm mouth and jaw.

A little coquettish head-dress crowned her still abundant tresses. A fashionably-made maroon silk, with quantities of lace ruffles about her throat and wrists, was her costume, and the

strong, white hand that held the teapot was loaded with sparkling rings.

Blanche had moved a little way from the fire, but still leant back in her chair in an attitude of luxurious repose, her feet crossed before her on the fender still, and displayed with most liberal generosity; her back faced downwards in her lap, and her eyes riveted on Helen.

She was apparently about twenty-five years of age, alight, fair, and very pale; her hair was profuse, and of a light sandy colour, and was worn in an enormous fringe; her brows and lashes were almost white, her eyes the palest grey; her nose insignificant; her one redeeming feature was her mouth, which came between an exceedingly short upper lip and a very pointed chin. Still, with all its advantages, it was a sour, ill-tempered mouth, and capable of saying exceedingly bitter things—and many a falsehood had emerged from those pretty little lips.

Miss Despard was dressed in a brown velvet dress, which fitted her slender figure to perfection. Deep lace cuffs were turned back over her tight sleeves, and a deep lace tie was coquettishly knotted *à la cavalier* under her chin, and fastened by a diamond fly.

Mr. Augustus Despard was fair, like his sister. His hair and eyebrows nearly white, his moustache (of which he was ridiculously proud) of a reddish hue. In figure he was small; his dress was the result of the most studied care; purple and fine linen, and the gold of Opbir contributed to his adornment. His cuffs were striking; his collar so high and so tight that he seemed half-choked, and his little, pale blue orbs (which were naturally prominent) were almost starting out of his head; but if art had done much for this young gentleman Nature had bestowed her favours with a niggard hand. His face was singularly plain; nothing could well be more unattractive.

He was reclining on the sofa in an easy attitude, caressing his little red moustache with his gemmy fingers, and staring at his mother's governess with all the eye-power at his command.

"She is a stunner—a ripper!" he ejaculated to himself, and quite worthy to be blessed with his most immediate attentions. His mother and sister's orbs have not been idle either.

They have been working at their new acquaintance with most unqualified amazement, tempered with a strong seasoning of displeasure.

This girl, with the purely Grecian profile, the low voice, the sweet eyes, is by no means what they could have wished for as an inmate. Supposing Dolly were to lose his head about her! Supposing Rupert were to see her! Supposing all manner of abominable things!

Helen suddenly met her aunt's inquisitorial eye, and coloured painfully.

"You are not the *least* like what I expected, Miss Brown!" said Mrs. Despard, with a curious smile. "You are much younger than Mrs. Phillips led me to expect, and much more—ah—remarkable looking!"

"In short, my mother wishes you to understand that you're a deuced sight too good-looking!" put in Dolly, with an air of easy frankness.

"You look wonderfully well considering you have spent five years in India!" proceeded Mrs. Despard. "You have quite a pure English complexion!" resentfully. Helen's complexion became of a very deep crimson tint at this remark; and Mrs. Despard changed the conversation by saying, "By-the-by, you came home in the *Carnatic* with my late niece, Miss Brown; it was a very sudden thing, was it not? Very sad, too!" with a society sigh.

"Very sudden, indeed!" replied Helen, glancing at Mrs. Despard's coloured gown—not a scrap of black, no semblance of mourning.

Mrs. Despard was a clever woman, and rapidly interpreted that expressive look.

"Poor girl! you see she had no friends or relations in the country but ourselves. So as we would not be hurting anyone's feelings, we did not mind going into black. We never saw her, and we had just got all our winter things. It would have been so excessively inconvenient."

"I wonder who will come in for her money!" said Miss Despard, gazing speculatively at the

fire. "You *ought* to, mamma," she added, with conviction.

"Did she seem a liberal kind of party? Did she speak of us with affection on board ship. Eh?" inquired Dolly, with would-be wit. "Was she free with her coin?"

"Really I am the last person to give you any information on that point," stammered Helen, stroking her muff with nervous fingers.

"Perhaps, as Miss Brown has had a long journey, she would like to go to her room," said Mrs. Despard, after a rather long silence. "Blanche, my dear, will you take her upstairs, if you don't mind!"

Blanche uprooted herself from her easy chair with anything but a good grace, and led the way from the room, with great dignity of demeanour, up a wide, shallow staircase, carpeted with carpets as thick and soft as moss, along a corridor through a swing door, and up another flight without any carpets at all; finally, into a large, bare—very bare and bleak-looking—room.

A small iron bed stood on a carpet island, amidst a waste of bare boards; a shabby, rickety, painted wardrobe occupied a niche near the wall, a painted dressing-table stood between the windows; the fire-place was empty; no attempt at luxury or comfort was visible, and the only decoration the apartment boasted was Miss Thompson's well-known tent-pegging picture, "Missed," probable value—half-a-crown.

"This is your room," said Blanche, waving a candlestick round. (How different to the promised bower of white and blue!) "Take off your things, and I will introduce you to Loo-Loo and Katie. By the way, did you get that sealskin paletot in India? You never did, I'm sure!"

"No; I bought it in London two days ago."

"Bought it in London! You never mean to say so! Why it must have cost fifty guineas at the very least."

"No; only forty," replied Helen, removing it, and laying it on the bed.

"Only forty! Well, I must say that a young lady who can give that price for a winter jacket should have no need to go out as a governess!" sneered Miss Blanche.

"I was very foolish to buy it, I now know to my cost," said Helen, humbly; "but I—I was tempted, I felt the cold so fearfully; and I thought I could afford it at the time, and afterwards discovered my mistake!"

"So I should imagine," said the other with conviction. "I wonder if it would fit me!" walking over to the bed, and proceeding to try it on. "Yes; it's not bad. I'll tell you what! I'll let you have five-and-twenty guineas for it, if you like!" said Blanche, eyeing herself in the glass, and smoothing down the fur with much complacency.

Five-and-twenty guineas for a jacket that cost forty two days previously! Here was a noble offer! Was this the girl who was to have been, as it were, a sister to her—this mean creature, who would trade on the necessities of a poor governess! Never!

"No thank you; as I have it I will keep it," replied Helen, with forced composure, and a visibly heightened colour.

"Ah! well; I dare say some day you will be sorry you did not take my offer; it is not everyone that will buy a second-hand article!" handing the coveted coat to its owner with an air of great annoyance, who forthwith proceeded to hang it up in the rickety wardrobe. "And now, if you are ready, we will go down to the school-room."

(To be continued.)

PEOPLE in Japan are called by the family name first, the individual, or what we should call the Christian, name next, and then the honorific—thus, "Smith Peter Mr."

It is a fact not generally known that there are over nine hundred miles of railway on the island of Cuba. As it appears on the map the little island does not seem big enough for a very extensive railway system. The schedules on the main lines are reasonably fast, and the passenger service good.

A FORTUNATE ACCIDENT.

—30—

"THE theory of love in a cottage is somewhat exhausted in these later days, my dear Eve. Still, if you so infinitely prefer the fostering of some such romantic idea, to accepting a man young, handsome, and with a rent-roll of tea thousand a year, I only beg you to remember, when too late to retrieve the irretrievable, that you have naught to blame but your own wilful obstinacy."

And Mrs. Crofton, having delivered herself of the above sentence, accompanied it by a long and profound sigh.

What impression the profound wisdom of her remarks had made was difficult to glean, since only the back of the listener (a very straight and graceful back, be it observed) was visible.

She was standing beside the window, looking down into the street below. A half-shrug of the pretty shoulders indicated that she had heard, at least. Mrs. Crofton could not suppress her impatience.

"You are incorrigible, Eve," she continued. "Do let me know how you intend to receive Guy Chester, and why you are so unwilling to accede to your uncle's wishes!"

The young girl turned now, revealing a face of more than usual loveliness; but there was a scarlet flush upon her cheek, and an ominous light in her eyes, as she at last replied.

"I am not a piece of merchandise," she said, "to be bought or sold, simply because an old man has taken it into his head that certain family interests are to be benefited thereby. Doubtless this plan is as repulsive to Guy Chester as myself. He is not in absolute need of money. If he is a man, he would rather work for a woman whom he loves than live in ease with one forced upon his heart!"

"Forced, Eve! You use such strong expressions, my dear! Remember that you and your cousin have not met since you were children! What is to prevent your falling in love with each other? At least, child, look your prettiest to-night, and receive him in your own charming way, and I will answer for the result, as far as he is concerned. It is arranged that he is to take you in to dinner."

"With the understanding that it is the first of many dinners where we are to be thrown upon each other's society—a sort of experiment as to the mutual entertainment of which each is capable. Really, auntie, I don't think the conditions will be inspiring."

And with a fascinating little air of disdain the young girl swept from the room.

"He shall see that I am not a party to this conspiracy, at any rate," she thought to herself, as a slight stir in the corridor outside her door, a few hours later, betokened the new arrival. "If I fascinate him," and she laughed scornfully, "it will be through no fault of mine."

Meantime a young and handsome man, making his toilet for dinner, allowed his thoughts to be somewhat similarly occupied.

"Twenty thousand a year, Uncle Joe, and a wife of your choosing, or three thousand and the charms of bachelorhood, or at least a free choice. Really, I believe the latter prospect to be more enticing. I hope the girl does not entertain any foolish ideas. It would make it embarrassing."

"I needn't have feared," he added, mentally, some sixty minutes after the above soliloquy, the formal introduction having been gone through with, and the third course in order at the dinner-table. "She hasn't an idea upon any subject. Beyond a few remarks on the weather, and the hope that I will find the shooting good, she has not honoured me. Evidently she is a school-girl, unaccustomed to society. Oh, no, Uncle Joe! a pretty face is not *all* I desire in a wife."

Nor, as the dinner progressed, did he find reason to change his mind.

In spite of the warning glances sent by Mrs. Crofton across the table to her niece there was no relaxing of the stiff politeness, so different from the usual gracious demeanour which made her so general a favourite.

Thus a week wore away, until the last day

appointed for Mr. Chester's visit had arrived. Quite by accident, Eve, fancying he had already started for the day's shooting, entered the library to find him seated there engrossed in writing a letter.

She would have withdrawn, but that at the rustling of her dress he raised his head and instantly sprang to his feet.

"Do not let me disturb you, I beg. I came in search of a book. How happens it you are not shooting to-day?" she said, apologetically.

"I was writing to Uncle Joe," he replied; and then a wave of blood mounted to his face.

He remembered that he had just inscribed the words which told him that the fulfilment of his pet ambition was impossible.

Eve was not slow to detect his embarrassment, and divined its cause. For the first time the stiffness which characterized her fled. She held out her hand with bewitching frankness and a little light laugh.

"Is there any reason we shouldn't be friends, Cousin Guy," she said, "because they wished to force us into being lovers against our will?"

"None in the world," he answered, catching her fingers in his own strong warm grasp. "It was an absurd idea, was it not? But now that we have broken the ice regarding it, we can afford to treat it as the absurd joke it is in reality is. But when you do select the fortunate man, cousin mine, let me know, and I promise to officiate as best man on the occasion."

"I will certainly call upon you, if you do not first set me the example," she replied.

And, snatching her hand from his detaining grasp, she ran out of the room.

"By Jove! as a friend she's not so bad. It was only this idea of matrimony which made her insupportable," thought the young man, returning to his writing.

But somehow the letter to Uncle Joe dragged; the outdoor atmosphere seemed to invite him to its enjoyment.

So, thrusting away the unfinished page, he sallied forth, with lighter heart than he had known for many days, now that the burden of future responsibilities had been lifted.

To-morrow he would be among new scenes; but at least he could remember Eve, not as an awkward *débütante*, forced upon his liking, but a girl frank enough to break down the barriers which hitherto had made even friendship between them impossible.

To-morrow! How little one knows of the to-morrow!

Tossing on his bed in feverish, delirious pain, Guy Chester noted not time, nor reckoned when that to-morrow to which he had looked forward became to-day.

He had been in the midst of the enjoyment of his day's shooting, when the barrel of the gun he carried burst, seriously wounding his arm and shoulder.

In the dusk of evening he had been borne back senseless and bleeding, to spend long weary days and wearier nights of pain and wakeful restlessness.

How glad Eve was that all possible misconception to any act of kindness shown him had been done away with!

They so fully understood each other now, so entirely comprehended the mutual aversion with which they regarded the future folly others had wished them to perpetrate, that she might take her place in the sick room without one moment's check upon her heart's impulse.

Therefore, it was she who adjusted the light so that it might never be too strong; it was her hands which knew best how to arrange and cool the heated pillows beneath his aching head; it was her voice which whiled away the hours of convalescence, reading to him the books he chose; it was her step which never jarred as it glided to and fro across his chamber; it was her coming he grew to watch for, her going he learned to miss, until weeks glided by, bringing with them the returning health and strength which, for the first time in his young life, had been so suddenly stricken from him.

But, although now able to leave the house where so long he had been an enforced guest, he still lingered.

A month had elapsed since his accident, when, one evening, sitting in the library, his unfinished letter to his Uncle Joe met his eye. He took it up and read it all.

Full well he remembered the sentiment of almost aversion which had filled his breast as he perused those lines. To what had it given place to-day?

Never before had he asked himself the question. It pressed upon him with overwhelming force.

Had he been blind, that, when he might have reached out his hand for this most priceless gift, he wilfully thrust it one side? How bare, how empty, how desolate his future life looked! and all because—But just here his reverie was cut short.

The door opened, and the blonde head of his cousin was thrust inquiringly in.

"Is aunty here?" she asked.

"No," he answered, "but come in. I have something to show you." And he held up the letter he had penned. "I wrote this the day that I was hurt. Read it," he said.

Wonderingly she took it from him. The room was half in shadow, but as she gleaned its meaning, the semi-darkness could not quite conceal the pained flush which rose to the lovely face, and the hurt, amazed look which grew in the dark eyes.

Her heart gave a great throb of pain, as through its suffering it realized its own existence; but its anguish cry was stifled, and only a scornful anger was in her tone as at last she spoke.

"Did you so entirely fail to comprehend me, and the nature of the bond between us, that you find it necessary to remind me of it *thus*?" she questioned.

"You wrong yourself," he answered. "Can you not understand a man's committing so great a folly that he feels he must make confession of it? Eve, you hold my confession in your hands. Tell me—is there for me no absolution? Can you not forgive my blind arrogance—my self-concoited suicide of my own happiness? Eve, you took the smart from my wounds as no one else could do. Will you not likewise take the smart from my heart—the heart which has learned to know that you are its sole sovereign? Darling, these weeks of pain and suffering have been tempered with an exquisite happiness. They have taught me the beauty of a true womanhood. I cannot hope to gain my pearl of great price by this sudden wooing, but in time, Eve, may I not hope to teach you the lesson which came to me untaught, unthought?"

Darkness had fallen now, and the lovely colour in her face was hidden even from his hungry view; but the letter to Uncle Joe had fluttered to the ground.

"Answer me, Eve!" he said, impatient in his great longing. "Will you never love me?"

"Never!" she whispered. "Ay, for ever!" and hid her burning cheeks upon his heart.

The next post took to Uncle Joe a joint letter, and though chuckling over the glad news his old eyes read, he little knew how Cupid had to resort to gunpowder instead of arrows to gain a forced entrance into two stubborn hearts.

CHARCOAL is one of the most remarkable articles in common use, and possesses many qualities not generally understood by the laity. As an absorbent of bad odours it has no equal. Placed around articles of food it prevents decay, and preserves them for a time in all their freshness. In fine powder it is one of the most perfect dressings for malignant wounds and those where proud flesh is present. As a cure for headache it is invaluable, a teaspoonful in half a glass of water often affording immediate relief. The power of charcoal to absorb gases is now generally appreciated. It will take up and hold thirty volumes of ammonia, forty of nitrous oxide, sixty-five of sulphurous acid, and eighty-five of hydrochloric acid. Some of these gases may be withdrawn and used at will. The storage value of charcoal, while it is just becoming known to practical workers, has already opened many avenues of future usefulness.

ESTRELLA'S MAD ENGAGEMENT.

—30:—

(Continued from page 369.)

She was very good and sweet, she would make a charming wife, but his heart was with Madge in her lowly grave. He could never love any other woman as he had loved her.

And yet, did he not owe Theo some recompense if she had learned unwittingly to hold him dear? Then, too, had he not a duty towards the family of which he was so proud? If he died childless the direct line of descendants would be broken, and he felt that this thought was as a nightmare to Sir Aylmer.

He brooded much over the matter, and at last with a sigh, said,—

"If she will take me as I am, and knowing all the truth, I will make her my wife; and may my darling Madge forgive my seeming infidelity."

That very afternoon Theo had been reading to him, until she supposed he had fallen asleep; so closing her book she sat with folded hands gazing wistfully, sadly before her.

From under drooped lids he saw her from time to time furtively wipe away the tears which would rise, and marking how sharpened were the soft curves of cheek and chin, how sorrowful the droop of the once laughter-loving mouth, his heart was filled with a great and tender pity for her pain, and a deep gratitude for all her goodness to him. Stretching out a wasted hand he laid it gently upon her, so startling her that her secret was betrayed in the eyes that met his.

"Why are you fretting, Theo? Poor little girl! you have had a terrible time with me; but your work will soon be over; I am getting well rapidly."

"And when you are well and strong you will need me no more," she almost whispered; "even now you could dispense with me."

"As a nurse, yes; and you look as though you had had a surfeit of watching and working—but as a wife, Theo, that is another thing."

She began to tremble, her colour came and went; she burst into tears. He waited for her to recover her lost control, then he spoke very frankly, very gravely,—

"Theo, I will be good and loyal to you; there is no other woman I would wish to wed, but I must tell you all the truth about myself. I cannot give you of my best; I can never quite put you in *her* place, but I am honestly devoted to you, and if you consent to become my wife with Heaven's help you shall not repent. Will you accept me on these terms, dear?"

She was no longer crying; there was a great light in her dark eyes, a new radiance on her face as she answered,—

"You give me more than I deserve, more than I ever dared hope for. I love you very truly, and if you will have me for your wife I desire nothing more."

"Stoop down, little white face; kiss me as a sign that you belong to me, as a token of your faith." Then, when she had obeyed, he said, "And why were you weeping here? It is my right to know."

"Oh!" and her hands went up to hide her blushing face, "must I tell?"

"Certainly, a wife's first duty is obedience; you cannot master that fact too soon."

"It was," she began desperately, "because I thought that you did not—care for me at all—and I should soon have to say good-bye for ever."

"Instead of which you find I care a great deal, and between us good-night shall be spoken—but never any more good-bye."

It was a very quiet wedding, owing to the facts of the bridegroom's recent illness, and the sudden decease of Lady Lingard in a paroxysm of madness; but Theo's cup of joy was full, and she grudged no thought that Jack bestowed upon his dead girl-wife.

Sir Aylmer lived to see Jack's boy trot about the grounds; then he passed painlessly away, and Jack ruled in his stead.

Between the Bolsovers and the Lingards exists a great affection; the ties which bind them seem knit but the closer by the advent of little ones in the two nurseries; it is an object of enviable dispute between Estrella and Theo which is the happiest woman. And Rodney's prophecy concerning her has been fulfilled to the utmost; stepping close by her husband's side, she has lifted and ennobled him, drawn him into that higher life whose beauty she first learned from the man she is proud to call brother.

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

SHE: "These horrid photographs don't do me justice at all." He: "My love, it's not justice you stand in need of, it's mercy."

FRACMAKER: "Laura, haven't you and Irene kissed and made up yet?" Laura: "Oh, yes! That is, we kissed. She was already made up."

HE: "They met at the seaside. Then commenced an acquaintance that would soon have ripened into love. But—" She: "But what?" He: "They married."

THE HEIR: "I am so suspicious of men that I sometimes wish I didn't possess wealth." The Good Friend: "But just think, dear, how lonesome you would be without it."

GROVER: "I rather think the new boy is going to succeed." Partner: "He doesn't know our customers yet." Grocer: "He knows enough to address all the married women as 'Miss.'"

WIFE: "John, what a lovely place! If we could only manage to raise the rent." Mr. Hunter Howes: "Oh, I've no doubt the landlord would see to that in a couple of months."

FIRST CITIZEN: "So he punched your head?" Second ditto (with his head bound up): "Oh, yes, rather." "But did nothing come of it?" "Nothing come of it? Why look at my head!"

MR. YOUNGHUSBAND: "Oh, doctor, come at once. My wife is suffering awful torture." Doctor: "Is it so bad as that?" Mr. Young-husband: "Yes. She has such a cold she can't speak."

TOMMY: "Pa, teacher wants us to tell what is the difference between 'speak' and 'talk.'" Mr. Figg: "Um—lemme see. Generally when I get into an argument with your mother she is out-spoken and I am out-talked."

"Will you please insert this obituary notice?" asked an old gentleman of an editor. "I make bold to ask it because the deceased had a great many friends about here who would be glad to hear of his death."

MRS. O'DOLEY: "Phwat does it say on the back o' this binch we're sittin' on?" Mrs. Mulgrew: "It says, 'For women only.'" "Let us move on an' ax a peeler to direct us to a ladies' binch. We're out o' place here intirely."

YOUNG LADY: "I have prevailed on my father to allow you to paint my portrait; but he doesn't like your work." D'Amber: "Why not?" "He says it lacks repose." "Huh! He does, eh? Well, I'll paint you as 'The Sleeping Beauty,' and then see."

"I don't know whether I like those photographs or not," said the young woman. "To speak candidly, they seem rather indistinct." "But you must remember, madam," said the wily photographer, "that your face is not at all plain."

ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENCE: "You say the witness who preceded you is not to be believed, even under oath. I suppose you have some cause for making such a statement?" Witness for the Prosecution: "Yes, sir; been fibbing with him a hundred times more or less."

ANXIOUS MOTHER: "My dear, I am afraid that young man you are engaged to will not make a good husband. He seems very hard to please." Pretty Daughter: "Hard to please? I should say he was. He never even thought of marrying a nybody until he met me."

LAURA: "While Jack was calling the other evening he made the statement that he would kiss me or die in the attempt." Belle: "Yes. (After a pause.) Well, did he kiss you?" Laura: "You haven't read any account of Jack's death in the papers, have you?"

"LISTEN, Charlotte. I am going to give a supper and a dance. Now, you will have to show what you can do, so as to keep up the credit of my establishment." Cook: "With pleasure, ma'am; but I can only dance the waltz and the polka. You will have to excuse me from the quadrilles."

"WELL," said the fashionable painter as they stood in the studio before his last picture, "what do you think of it?" "In the first place, I ought to tell you, sir, that I am no judge." "Never mind, let us have your opinion." "To tell the truth—I think it splendid." "There, see what a capital judge you are!"

THERE were two fellows at the Noodles' Club the other day, and as I sat in the lobby reading the paper I heard one of them say: "How did Algy happen to get such a terrible cold?" "Why, don't you know? He changed a large collar button for a small one. He's terrible reckless these cold days."

MISS DUKANE: "I want to have some photographs taken during the holidays. Where would you go?" Miss Humley: "I'd go to Mr. Snap-shot if I were you. He made some perfectly lovely pictures of me." Miss Dukane: "Did he really? Well, if he is such a clever artist as that I'll go there, too."

WIFE (as husband comes in late): "Why, Henry, the dinner is spoiled. Where have you been?" Suburbanite: "I got carried by the station, and had to wait an hour for an up train." Wife: "Reading at the time, I suppose?" Suburbanite: "No; I was trying to convince a friend of the benefits of living in the suburbs."

"PAPA," inquired the editor's only son, "what do you call your office?" "Well," was the reply, "the world calls an editor's office the sanctum sanctorum." "Then, I suppose," and the small boy was thoughtful for a moment, "that mamma's office is a spanktum spanktorium, isn't it?"

MISS GLADYS (severely): "Bridget, your manners are not good. You should not come into the room so suddenly when Mr. Callalot is passing the evening with me." Bridget (disgusted): "Sudden! And is it sudden you call it, an' me wid me ear to the blessed keyhole a full three-quarters of an hour?"

BURGOLAR: "Where's your money? Quick!" Terrified Woman: "My husband has it all, and he's out." "Then I'll hide in the cupboard till he comes back. But remember! Not a word on yer life! Where's he gone?" "He's gone to see his lawyer." "Humph! Well, on second thoughts, I think I won't wait."

THE young man, who evidently thought a great deal of himself, hailed an omnibus passing along the Strand, and addressed the conductor thus: "Aw—conductah—which—aw—route do you take?" "We don't take no root," was the answer. "We never stops long enough anywhere for that." The bus drove on, leaving the youth rooted to the spot!

"WHERE did you go for your honeymoon?" "Oh, we planned a splendid trip! Paris, Lyons, Cannes, Rome, Cairo; and back through Constantinople, Vienna, and down the Rhine, home. But we had to modify it a little." "How was that?" "Well, you see, the wife's rather a bad sailor, and shirked the Channel passage, so we settled at Southend, and had a fortnight there instead."

THE mother of a family who were going to spend the Christmas holidays with a relative in the country showed the ticket collector on the railway a couple of half-fare tickets for her two children. The latter, after looking at her doubtfully, said: "How old are they?" "They are only six, and they are twins." "Ah!" Then, after a moment's pause, the man inquired, "And where were they born?" The mother (unthinkingly): "This one was born in Bradford and the other in London."

AN aristocratic lady, meeting a beggar in rags, gave him her card, saying, "Here is my address. If you call at any time, you can have some of my husband's left-off clothes." A few days later she saw the poor fellow again in the street. "Why did you not come, as I told you?" "Please, ma'am, this is Wednesday, and on your card it said, 'At home on Thursday.'"

"Yes," said the lady lecturer, "women have been wronged for ages. They have suffered in a thousand ways." "There is one in which they never suffered," said a meek-looking man, standing up. "What way is that?" demanded the lecturer. "They have never suffered in silence." And then the lecturer demonstrated beyond a doubt that he was right, in her case, at least.

"JOHN," said a grocer to his new assistant, "to succeed in the retail grocery line it is necessary to practice a large amount of economy. Willful waste makes woful want." "Yes, sir." "Now I was surprised," the grocer went on, "when you picked the flies out of the sugar barrel this morning that you didn't brush the sugar off their legs. Don't let it happen again, John."

"HA!" gasped the murderer, in sudden fear, "the blood-stained garments! Where shall I put them that they may be destroyed for ever?" He paced the floor in agony. "I have it!" he cried at last. Triumphant marking his initials on the clothing in large, indelible type, and wrapping it in a paper, upon which he wrote his name and address in a bold hand, he sent it to a steam laundry. Exulting then in his security, he went forth.

"PAPA," said an inquisitive boy, "don't fishes have legs?" "They do not," answered papa. "Why don't they, papa?" "Because the fishes swim and don't require legs." The small boy was silent for a few minutes, and papa forgot all about his questions. Then he asked: "Papa, ducks have legs, haven't they?" "Why, yes, ducks have legs." "Well, ducks swim, don't they?" "Yes." "Then why don't fishes have legs if ducks do? Or why don't ducks not have any legs if fishes don't?" Papa gave it up.

A GENTLEMAN, accompanied by a lady wearing a handsome dress and bonnet, came out of the Albert Hall one night to find it raining, while they were without umbrella or waterproof clothing. "Why, Charles!" the lady cried, "it's raining." "So I see," said Charles, calmly. "Well, what shall we do?" "I rather think we shall have to let it rain," replied the matter-of-fact husband. Excited by the disaster awaiting her garments, the lady amused the bystanders greatly by saying, "Why, how can we, Charles, when I have on this light dress and bonnet!"

THE superintendent of a Sunday-school was one afternoon explaining to his scholars the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal; how Elijah built an altar, put wood upon it, and cut a bullock in pieces, and laid it on the altar. "And then," said the superintendent, "he commanded the people to fill four barrels with water, and to pour it over the altar; and they did this four times. Now I wonder if any little boy or girl can tell me why all this water was poured over the bullock upon the altar." There was silence for a few moments, when one little boy spoke up: "Please, sir, to make the gravy."

"So you enjoyed your Continental trip, did you?" inquired the simple old gentleman. "I haven't been over since '53, but my recollections are still vivid. I remember once standing upon Mont Blanc, watching the sun sink to rest behind the blue waters of the Mediterranean, while to my right, the noble Rhine rushed onward to the Black Sea, and the Pyrenees, still holding the snow of winter, were on my left. I remember, while standing there—" "But, Mr. Gray," feebly interrupted his listener, "I was on Mont Blanc myself, and really—you'll excuse me—but you must be mistaken in your geography." "I returned the old man lightly, 'Not a bit of it! But I forget; it's different now. You know, my dear boy, that since my day the entire map of Europe has been changed by those awful wars, and so, of course, you can't appreciate what it was in '53!'"

SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales will probably spend a couple of weeks at Marlborough House in February, and will pay a visit to the Queen at Osborne, according to the etiquette of the Royal family, before joining his yacht *Britannia* at Marseilles for a cruise in the Mediterranean.

It is noticeable that the Duchess of Cumberland bears a slight resemblance to the Duke of York, her nephew, and to the Duchess of York, whose mother is cousin to the Queen of Denmark. The present Earl and his mother also share in this likeness, probably inherited from some German ancestor of these five personages.

THE marriage of Prince Frederick of Schaumburg-Lippe and the Princess Louise, daughter of the Crown Prince of Denmark, is to take place at Copenhagen early in March. In consequence of the Court being still in mourning for the late Emperor of Russia the lengthy programme of public and private fetes in honour of the event has been entirely cancelled, and the function will be attended only by near relatives of the Danish Royal Family.

A MARRIAGE will take place immediately between Prince Edward of Anhalt, the second son of the Duke of Anhalt-Desau, and Princess Louise, youngest daughter of Prince Maurice, the brother and heir of the reigning Duke of Saxa-Altenburg. The two sisters of Princess Louise are married to the Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovitch of Russia and to the reigning Prince of Schaumburg-Lippe. Prince Edward's younger brother, Prince Aribert, is the son-in-law of Prince and Princess Christian.

THERE are to be two Drawing Rooms at Buckingham Palace before Easter, of which the first will probably be held on the 27th or 28th of February, and the second on March 5th, but the dates cannot be positively fixed and officially announced for some time to come. The Queen will receive the Corps Diplomatique at the first Drawing Room only if Her Majesty decides not to hold a Court for which function the preliminary arrangements have been made, the Lord Chamberlain having sent to Osborne a provisional list of invitations for approval.

THE Marquis of Lorne is doing his best to introduce a game which is at present unknown in England, although extensively played in Northern Europe. It has not a pretty-looking name, its cognomen being *Klotschiessen*, and is not very far removed from golf, although not played with a club. Flat ground, it appears, is necessary for the game, which is a rural one. A wooden ball is all that is required by each player, and his object is to throw the ball round the course chosen.

THE only apparent cause in Russia for dissatisfaction with the Czarina is her Majesty's fondness for conversing with her husband in German or English, the reason being that she has not spoken French sufficiently frequently to render her fluent in that language. On the other hand, she has made most astonishing progress in Russian, and can express herself with wonderful ease in that far more difficult tongue. Her Majesty's subjects are greatly surprised, as well as pleased, at this, and naturally her instructress, *Fraulein Schneider*, is very proud of her illustrious pupil.

THE Queen has settled that she will travel to the Riviera by way of Cherbourg, embarking at Portsmouth Harbour (from the south railway jetty), on board the *Victoria* and *Albert*. Her Majesty will leave Windsor in the afternoon, dining and sleeping on board the Royal yacht, which is to lie in Portsmouth Harbour during the night. The *Victoria* and *Albert* will leave next morning, after the arrival of the London papers and letters for Cherbourg, and early in the evening the Queen will start from the port station for Nice direct. The whole journey from Windsor will be completed in about fifty-three hours, the second night being spent in the train. The Queen will probably stop at Maçon for *dejeuner*, and at Marseilles for dinner.

STATISTICS.

It is estimated that the crow will destroy 700,000 insects every year.

THERE are always three and a half millions of people on the seas of the world.

A PIANO requires forty-eight different materials in its construction, and they come from sixteen different countries.

It was stated some time ago by one of the heads of departments of the London and North-Western Railway that that company issues yearly fifty tons of railway tickets.

GEMS.

TUITION is high in the school of experience but the instruction is thorough.

METAL will certainly rust if not used, and the body will assuredly become diseased if not exercised.

THERE is no rigid line between duties to self and duties to others. They melt into one another; they act and react upon each other; and, when the right balance between them is destroyed neither can be properly fulfilled.

LOOKING to others for our standard of happiness is a sure way to be miserable. Our business is with our own hearts and our own motives. And you cannot borrow time. There is no interest accumulating on the days as we pass them by. Every night the account is closed.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CREAM DOUGHNUTS.—Beat one cup each of sour cream and sugar together, add two beaten eggs, a level teaspoonful of soda, a little salt, and flour enough to roll.

RAISIN PIE.—Boil one cup raisins one and a half hours, stone, and add one half cup of sugar, small piece butter, sprinkle with flour. Bake with two crusts.

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE FOR SALADE.—Cream in a bowl with a silver fork, half a cupful of butter; add the yolks of four raw eggs, one by one, a little pepper, a saltspoonful of salt and the juice of half a lemon. Set the bowl in a saucepan of boiling water, and beat with an egg whisk until it grows a little thick; then add half a cupful of hot veal stock or of boiling water.

APPLE CUSTARD PIE.—Peel sour apples, stew until soft and not much water left in them; mash fine and put through a colander, add a cup of sugar, a slice of butter, one egg and the yolks of two others well beaten, a little nutmeg, cinnamon or lemon may be used for flavouring. Bake with one crust. Make a meringue of the whites and pour over the top of the pie when baked. Place in the oven until hardened.

PRUNE PUDDING.—Wash and stone one pound of prunes, simmer them in three quarters of a pint of water, the juice and rind of one lemon, and two tablespoonfuls sugar till they are soft. Line a bowl or mould with pieces of bread that have been soaked in clarified butter. Pour in the prunes and add one tablespoonful marmalade; cover with a round of bread; put buttered paper on top and bake in a moderate oven, then turn out.

ALMOND CREAM CAKE.—Two cupfuls of powdered sugar, one of sweet milk, three of flour, one-fourth of a cupful of butter, whites of four eggs, well beaten, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, and half a teaspoonful of vanilla. Bake in four tins and put together in layers, with cream made as follows: Whip one cupful of sweet cream to a froth, and stir gradually into it half a cupful of powdered sugar, a few drops of vanilla, and one pound of almonds blanched and chopped. Spread quite thick between the layers of cake. Frost the top and sides.

MISCELLANEOUS.

EVERYTHING in China is sliced, so that it can be eaten with the chop-sticks.

SAFETY matches that can be used without a box are to be placed on the market by a German inventor.

THE natives of Australia use telegraph wire to make bracelets, earrings, and nose rings, and tear down the telegraph lines for that purpose.

THE toad captures insects by darting out its tongue so rapidly that the eye cannot follow the motion. The tip is covered with a glutinous secretion, to which a fly or other small insect adheres.

AN authority on cats says that yellow hairs, no matter how few in number, always indicate that the wearer is a female. He further adds: "No male cat was ever known to have the slightest tint of yellow."

THERE is a Spanish proverb that "On Tuesday one should neither travel nor marry." And this superstition is so ingrained in the Spanish that, even in Madrid, there are never any weddings on Tuesdays, and the trains are almost empty.

THE effect which living at high altitudes has on the blood of man and animals has recently been investigated. The result shows that the proportion of oxygen and other constituents in the blood of Alpine men and animals is exactly the same as among similar creatures living below sea level.

THE little European fish called the bitterling, one of the carp family, is remarkable from the fact that the female is the only fish that has a slender ovipositor nearly as long as its body. With this she deposits her yellow eggs in the gills of the fresh-water mussel. This has long been known, but in the last number of the German "Journal of Zoology," Dr. Olt publishes an exhaustive paper, accompanied by elaborate plates, giving figures of the embryos in different stages, and the young lying nearly ready to hatch between the folds of the mussel's gills, which serve as brooding chambers. The fish is so named from its very bitter taste.

A GERMAN has succeeded in making a glass that he claims will not break or crack over the fiercest flame and may be sprinkled with cold water while filled with boiling liquids. In the manufacture of this glass the ordinary methods are disregarded, and instead of a single thickness of glass in the vessel with the ordinary characteristics of compression on one side and tension on the other, there is an outer skin of glass that has a composition capable of greater expansion than the inner portion. The problem of elastic and malleable glass is one that will win for its solver much gold and glory, and it is to be hoped that the invention mentioned may be one of the first steps in this important achievement.

In certain districts of Africa, notably in the west, central, and Congo sections, there is a most curious and puzzling disease that has baffled all attempts to prevent or cure it. The first symptoms are an appearance of drowsiness, indicated by drooping of the eyelids, and a lack of interest except when roused. This tendency to sleep, which is very slight at first, rapidly increases until the sufferer falls asleep at all times in the day, and over any work or amusement, no matter what may be its character. The general health does not appear to suffer any perceptible impairment, and treatment of the most active sort has little if any effect. After a time, the patient is in a perpetual slumber, seeming to be never really awake, and if roused to take food or drink immediately relapses into the usual lethargic condition. The disease or decline sometimes lasts twelve months, death apparently ensuing from starvation. It rarely attacks white persons, but is for the most part confined to young persons between the ages of twelve and twenty years. Boys and young men are more frequently the victims than girls or young women. This most remarkable state of things is under investigation by eminent medical men, and their reports will be awaited with interest.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. H.—About ten years ago.
D. P.—We know nothing about it.
FRANCE.—The only record is at the Admiralty.
GERTRAUDE.—We advise you to dye the curtains.
D. B.—The value varies greatly in different parts of the world.
BERNARDINE.—Queen Victoria was born on May 24th, 1819.
CONSTANT READER.—The title of the Chinese Emperor is "Son of Heaven."
BALPE.—Cost can be ascertained from registers, or from "Whitaker's Almanack."
LOUISE.—Russian cats are scarce and valuable; your best course is to advertise for one.
BESSE.—Attar of roses is the base of many rose perfumes, and is imported in small tins.
BOB.—It is possible to learn shorthand at home, but it is not easy or profitable if one can do otherwise.
TROUBLED.—It is probably owing to a weak condition of health. Your best course would be to get medical advice.
ADA.—Botanists are not in accord relative to the native country of the tuberose. Some think it is the East Indies, others Mexico.
OLD READER.—The despot must give himself up unconditionally, and receive punishment before authorities will listen to overtures for his release by parole.
CURIOUS.—Women who are physically weak are as a rule more thoughtful and quick-witted than men; there are exceptions of course.
BETTY.—Soak with turpentine and sea if it loosens varnish; if so, preserve till it is well off, then use Brooke's soap to polish with, or oil and emery powder.
ENGAGED.—Wear a pretty and stylish street costume, and a bonnet—something that will answer for calling, and will be useful for a long time to come.
INDIGNANT WIFE.—If a husband and wife are on a proper footing of relationship the wife will not seek to open his letters, and he will not seek to prevent her.
INQUIRER.—The quotation "All men think all men mortal but themselves," comes from Young's "Night Thoughts"—first night.
LEILA.—Under no circumstances will any girl with a proper regard for herself bleach her hair. Take good care of the hair, and leave it the same colour that nature made it.
VERA.—The preliminary scientific examination must be passed by all desiring to graduate in medicine at the London University, the subjects being chemistry and physics and biology.
BEST MAN.—The best man, of course, is expected to give a present to the bride; if he thinks fit he may also give a present to the bridesmaid, such as gloves, satin-alippers, fan, or other trifles; but that is optional.
KATHLEEN.—Men of sense rarely admire women whose waists are made small by tight clothing. Such women are deformed and abnormal, and neither command nor deserve admiration or respect.
JACKO.—Books and flowers are two things on which one may never go wrong. Society permits the giving of these, and no significance other than good will is supposed to be attached to the action.
SUREY.—Take 1 pound flour, 1 pound butter, 1 pound sugar, 1 dozen eggs, 2 pounds currants, 1 pound sultana raisins, 1 pound mixed peel, half-pound ground almonds, 1 large teaspoonful cinnamon, 1 large teaspoonful baking powder; bake for about four hours in a moderate oven.
STREEL.—Use 1½ pound icing sugar, 4 whites, 1 teaspoonful lemon juice; beat for a quarter of an hour with broad spoon like a butter spoon till thick and white, spread on with broad knife, use remainder with a bag and tube for decoration.
PATIENCE.—Benzine slightly diluted and applied with a sponge, or it might be safer in inexperienced hands to scrape French chalk over the greasy places, allow it to lie on for a time and remove and repeat till all is cleaned.
GABRIELA.—It may be pleasantly varied by using different flavours. A choice of mace, a bay leaf, a clove, or celery salt, is about all that is permitted, but by combining these and using singly a monotony of flavour is avoided.
A. K.—The native Armenians of Western Asia, estimated at one-seventh of the whole population, are distinguished for enterprise in commercial and banking transactions. They preserve their own language which is regarded as Indo-European in its relationship.
M. B. P.—Fragments of the gem, which appear to have been parts of amulets, are frequently met with in Egyptian ruins, and several antique cameos and intaglios, cut in turquoise, are in the Vatican at Rome. A variety of turquoise in a layer of red sandstone has been found near Mount Sinai, in Arabia.
OLD SUBSCRIBER.—Angora, which is celebrated for the long-haired goats bred in its vicinity, the wool of which, as you state, is largely exported, is a town of Asiatic Turkey, 215 miles east south-east of Constantinople. The items of export next in importance are merino twist and goats' hides.

PATTY.—Mix together equal measures of oyster liquor and milk. To one pint of this mixture add one pint of wheat flour, a few oysters, two eggs, and a small portion of salt. Drop it by spoonfuls into hot lard, and fry them a nice brown.

INQUIRITIVE.—That which is popularly known as the funny-bone, just at the point of the elbow, is in reality not a bone at all, but a nerve which lies near the surface, and which on getting a knock or a blow causes the well-known tingling sensation in the arms and fingers.

D. G.—The introduction of grave themes at the gathering referred to was a serious mistake, and was calculated to mar it beyond remedy, if the controversy upon them had continued. You did right to interpose your objections at the proper time, and turn the current of conversation to lively and readily discussed topics.

ISORAMUS.—A philanthropist is one who loves humanity, and is ever trying to promote the good of his fellows. A misanthropist is a hater of mankind—one who thinks ill of his kind, and is always expiating the worst from them. The two terms represent opposing characteristics.

YOUNG HOSTESS.—There are many elaborate ways to trim tables, but it is usually admitted that a simple and delicate style is best. Enormous quantities of flowers rather suggest a desire to show what one can do, and are less effective than a few well-chosen ones used with taste and discretion.

ANNA.—If the articles you desire to clean are made of solid brass we advise you to treat them first of all with Brooke's soap; after that with a preparation called pinkie, obtainable of most grocers in small cakes; if, however, they are merely iron lacquered, the verdigris will have eaten through that, and there must be relacquering to restore the coating upon the articles.

A COUNTRY MAID.

Her eyes the sun-kissed violets mate,
 And fearless is their gaze;
 She moves with graceful, careless gait
 Along the country ways.
 The roses blushing in her cheek,
 That ne'er decay nor fade,
 Her laughter gay, her words bespeak
 A simple, country maid.

No flashing gems adorn her hair,
 Nor clasp her lily neck,
 No jewelled circlets, rich and rare,
 Her sun-brown hands bedeck;
 But pearly teeth through lips as red
 As rosiest rubies gleam;
 The tresses o'er her shoulders spread
 A golden mantle seem.

Her looks are kind, and sweet the smile
 That sparkles in her eyes;
 Her mind, her heart, are free from guile;
 She is not learned nor wise.
 No worldly art, no craft has she
 Acquired, her charms to aid;
 And yet she stole my heart from me,
 This simple, country maid.

M. H.

VERENA.—One pound flour, half teaspoon salt, 1½ teaspoon baking powder, 2 teaspoon sugar, 1 small tablespoon butter or dripping; quarter pound currants may be added if desired. Rub the butter in among all the other things, and then wet it with about one breakfast cup of sweet milk. Roll the scones out pretty thin, cut them neatly, and put them on the griddle till a pale yellow.

ROBERT CHARLES.—The Buchanans were a numerous clan in Stirlingshire and the north of Loch Lomond; the name is believed to be territorial—that is, derived from locality; Buchanan in Aberdeenshire; it was originally spelled Buchannane, and means one employed in cattle rearing or selling—a trader; the Spanish word "Bucaneros" comes from same root, and English name Buckingham is also traced to same derivation.

WOULD-BE PEACEMAKER.—Each member should take part in promoting the harmony of the domestic circle. Sometimes it seems impossible to reconcile one member of a family with another, and in that case it is asking too much of any one to continue his or her efforts toward the end in view. It would, we think, be better to suspend one's labour of love until such time as shall promise to be more productive of satisfactory results.

ERIC.—The dragon is often alluded to in the Bible, but what kind of animal it was is not positively known. Some suppose that it was the crocodile, while others think that in some passages it refers to a species of giant serpent, or to a wild beast like the jackal or wolf. It may have been the enormous boa of Africa and the East. In mythology the dragon is represented as of very great size, with wings, claws, and a tail.

R. P. S.—1. You write a good commercial hand, but the letters would bear to be a little smaller, in our opinion. 2. Powerful pumps are arranged to throw jets of water from the stern of the boat. The high pressure and tremendous force of the jet as it strikes the water of the sea is said to give promise of most effective action as soon as the jets can be made sufficiently forceful. As the test now stands, the City of Glasgow made eight and one-half knots an hour with an engine of one hundred and eighty horse-power. It is the opinion of certain engineering experts that hydraulic propulsion will supersede the screw in some classes of crafts, and may, in time, prove a formidable rival to existing motive powers.

R. F. L.—Take out the inside, scale and split the fish. Rub it with common salt and Jamaica pepper, and let it drain for twenty-four hours. Then mix together salt, a little coarse sugar, and saltpetre, and rub the fish with this twice. Leave it on a tray to pickle for two days. Then wipe and dry it, stretch it on sticks, and suspend it in the smoke of a wood or peat fire to dry; or it may be partly dried by the heat of the fire or the sun.

LAUNDRESS.—Get a penny worth of chloride of lime, soak it in two breakfast cups of water for several hours, stirring it up now and again; when it settles pour it through fine muslin; put this in a bottle for use. Take two tablespoons of this liquid chloride of lime and put it in a bowl with four breakfast cups of water; put the collars in wet, and soak them for twelve hours. If the yellow is not quite out make the water stronger and try again. The same water will do for pillow cases.

L. X.—If a lion and a strong horse were to pull in opposite directions the horse would pull the lion backward with comparative ease; but if the lion were hitched behind the horse, and facing in the same direction, and were allowed to exert all his strength in backing, he could easily pull the horse down upon his haunches, or drag him across the ring, so much greater is his strength when exerted backward from the hind legs than in forward pulling.

DOLLY.—It is always better to take the advice of one's parents upon the subject of marriage. There may have been marriages which have turned out well notwithstanding the opposition of the parents of both parties, for human nature is fallible, and the wisest of us make mistakes, but as a rule, the marriage that promises the best is the one which is approved by the fathers and mothers of the two who are made one by "the tie which binds their willing hearts."

A MODERN GIRL.—In society it is usual to talk on subjects suggested by the occasion, rather than to indulge in remarks which would seem to be premature. There are always themes of present interest upon which to converse without recurring to topics of past importance; but if they must be discussed, let it be done in a sprightly and not in a prosaic way. Prosy people are not popular in society, and a young lady should be the last to subject herself to the charge of being one of them.

TRACER.—Cut the steak as for boiling; put it into a stewpan with a good-sized lump of butter; set it over a slow fire, and keep turning it until the butter becomes a thick gravy; then pour it into a bowl, and add more butter to the steak. When almost done enough, pour all the gravy into the bowl, put more butter in the pan, and fry the steak a bright brown over a quick fire. Then take it out of the pan, put it into a hot dish, slice an onion in it, put a small portion of the onion into the gravy, and pour it hot on the steak.

NANCIE.—To make egg cheese, beat six eggs well, and put them into three gills of new milk, with sugar, cinnamon, and lemon peel to taste. Sift it over the fire, keep stirring it, and squeeze a quarter of a lemon into it to turn it to cheese. Let it run into any shape preferred. When it is cold turn it out and pour over it a little almond cream made as follows: Beat some sweet almonds fine with a little cream; then put them into a pint of cream; let it boil and strain it; add the yolks of three eggs well beaten; set it over the fire, and make it like a custard.

INTERESTED.—Chemistry, while yet in its infancy, has already shown what the possibilities of chemical compounds are. We can already produce tea and coffee artificially as well as many other food substances. A new American process claims to produce sugar from grass at the cost of one cent per pound. There is always a supply when a demand becomes imperative, and when concentrated food-tablets are insisted upon there will not be wanting inventive genius to study out the ways and wherefores of chemical theories and furnish the articles required.

MARJORAY.—A delicate and delicious soup may be easily made from canned salmon. Remove all the oil, bones and skin from half a can of the fish. Chop fine. Cook one slice of onion in one quart of milk. Melt one tablespoonful of butter, add two tablespoonfuls of flour, and pour on the hot milk. Add one teaspoonful of salt, and one saltspoonful of pepper, and the salmon. Rub through a sieve and serve. Have the salmon chopped as fine as possible. Raddish, ood, or any kind of fish may be used, but salmon is considered the best for flavouring. French peas may be added if liked.

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